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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE READING STRATEGIES AND THE SOCIOCULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF SIX EARLY READERS

by

(C)

DIANE MARY MURRAY

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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FALL, 1988

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE READING STRATEGIES AND THE SOCIOCULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF SIX EARLY READERS submitted by DIANE MARY MURRAY in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

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Date June 27, 1988

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is three fold: (1) to determine the strategies employed by early readers when reading, (2) to establish the concepts of reading held by early readers and (3) to investigate the relationship between the reading process and the children's sociocultural environment. The child sample consisted of 6 kindergarten children. The children, identified as early readers by their teachers, were assessed and designated as early readers on the following criteria: (1) ability to read the graded word list contained in the Bader Reading and Language Inventory (1983) and (2) ability to fluently read an easy book. The children read passages from the Bader Reading and Language Inventory (1983), retold what they had read, replied to questions about what they had read, answered questions about the reading behavior exhibited while reading and responded to two questionnaires which attempted to measure their awareness of the reading process. Writing samples were also obtained. The adult sample consisted of 6 parents. The parents responded to a questionnaire which addressed the children's reading development.

The results indicated that the early readers came from a literate home background containing a supportive individual who mediated print for them. They are effective processors and comprehenders of print employing the three cueing systems (graphic, grammatical and semantic) to predict print in order to create meaning. They perceived themselves as readers and were

seen as readers by their parents. They are more competent and confident in reading than writing.

Implications for teaching and suggestions for further research on early reading were suggested.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Reading acquisition has always been an area of great interest to teachers and researchers as both groups strive to understand how literacy develops in young children. A study conducted in 1931 by Morphett and Washburne generalized that children were not ready to read before the age of six and a half. Since the 1930's teachers of young children have usually supplied a reading readiness period before children embark on the road to reading. There has been a growing reaction, however, against this concept for it is now recognized that children's literacy knowledge begins and emerges throughout the preschool years. Holdaway (1979) and others (Goodman, 1980; Lass, 1982; Juliebo, 1985 and Brailsford, 1986) have established that children already have discovered and understand a great deal about print prior to formal instruction as a result of their "natural" continuous encounters with print.

Prior to the 1980's, schools concentrated their efforts on reading readiness and beginning reading instruction to facilitate reading development in young children. The terms, "reading readiness" and "beginning reading instruction" have led to many false assumptions: one being that children have to learn certain skills before they are ready to learn to read, the other suggests that children need instruction in reading before reading can be acquired. Recent research on emergent literacy indicates that both terms are inappropriate because children are engaged in the process of

acquiring literacy very early in life and do not require a period of reading readiness (Doake, 1985). As much of the research on emergent literacy has been conducted in the 1980's, debate still continues about how young children learn to read and how best to instruct them.

The terms "reading readiness" and "beginning reading instruction" have recently been replaced by the concept that reading development is "a gradual spontaneous evolution beginning with the holistic attribution of meaning in print and later, apparently with instruction, becoming refined in such a way as to enable the reader to become more knowledgeable about the component elements of words" (Reid, 1981, p. 70). Children (early readers) who have learned to read without systematic instruction validate that literacy knowledge can and does successfully evolve prior to formal instruction.

In order to understand how this "spontaneous evolution" relates to the reading process, more indepth research is needed to explore the effects of children's exposure to print prior to school entrance. The examination of early readers, a prominent source of knowledge on reading acquisition, is crucial to gaining valuable insight into early reading development because of their success in becoming readers without formal instruction. Hence, children who are early readers could hold the answers to the enigma--how is reading acquired and how can it best be taught? Pinson (1982) notes that "skilled young fluent readers may show that many of our assumptions about how reading is learned may not always match with how reading is taught " (p. 5). By observing early readers, we

may obtain a more complete and comprehensive picture of how reading acquisition unfolds in young children.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purposes of this study are to determine what strategies early readers engage in as they read and what concepts of reading are held by them. A secondary focus investigates the relationship between the reading process and the early reader's sociocultural environment.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What strategies do early readers use when interacting with print?
2. What concepts of reading are held by early readers?
3. What sociocultural factors appear to influence children's early reading behavior?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Early Readers

"Children who have not received school instruction in reading, who are are able to recognize a minimum of approximately twenty words on a word list and who read some books independently" (Teale, 1978, p. 924).

Beginning Readers

Children who are learning to read through formal instruction in a school setting.

Easy Books

Books which contain words from "one of the several lists of frequently occurring words which students are expected to recognize automatically as whole units in the early stages of reading instruction" (Harris and Hodges, 1981, p. 295), for example the books in the I Can Read series.

Instructional Reading Level

Level where children have 95% (on grade levels primer-third) or 98% (on grade levels fourth and above) word recognition accuracy on prepared reading and can comprehend 60-70% or better of what they read (Bader, 1983).

Frustrational Reading Level

Level where children have less than 95% (on grade levels primer-third) or less than 98% (on grade levels fourth and above) word recognition accuracy on prepared reading and understand less than 60% of what they have read (Bader, 1983).

Clause

"A clause is defined as a unit of language that contains a finite subject and a finite verb. A clause may be either main or subordinate" (Fagan and Currie, 1983, p. 99).

Miscues

"Any observed oral response to print that does not match the expected response" (Goodman, 1982, p. 103).

Retelling

"The process in which the reader, having read a story, describes what has happened in the story" (Harris and Hodges, 1981, p. 279).

Fluency

"Freedom from word identification problems which might hinder expression of ideas during oral reading" (Harris and Hodges, 1981, p. 120).

Strategy

"A systematic plan for achieving a specific goal or result" (Harris and Hodges, 1981, p. 311).

Basic Skills

"A general term which refers to those skills, primarily cognitive and language related, which are needed for many school learning tasks" (Harris and Hodges, 1981, p. 31).

LIMITATIONS

1. This study involved only six students, therefore, it limits the generalizability of the findings to a wider population.
2. The children in the study might possess limited linguistic capabilities to verbalize what they really know about the reading process.
3. Children in the study may not have been familiar with the procedure of oral retelling of a story and, therefore may not be able to demonstrate the extent of their comprehension of text.

4. Only one parent from each family was interviewed--the one who volunteered to be interviewed. A broader knowledge base may have been attained if both parents had participated.
5. All sessions and interviews were tape recorded which might have contributed to a heightened level of anxiety for some of the participants, resulting in a loss in the reliability and validity of the interview data.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Research in early literacy development has generally focussed on observing beginning readers as they learn to read within the school environment. The premise has been made that by observing beginning readers, knowledge of the reading process could be enhanced and expanded. The information gained, however, related more to a particular instructional method in the teaching of beginning reading rather than how children learned to read. As a result, educators have a restricted view of how the reading process develops in young children. Furthermore, there is a need to focus not only on the reading behavior of beginning readers but also the reading behavior of early readers in order to establish theories about early reading acquisition. Research on early readers may provide a more definitive knowledge base of the reading development of young children, enhancing educators' understanding of how to foster literacy development in children. Failure to investigate the literacy behaviors of these children who have learned to read without

systematic instruction has allowed a significant source of information on reading acquisition to be overlooked.

This present study was conducted to expand the limited body of knowledge on early readers. It addresses factors that may influence some children to become readers without formal instruction. It also provides information concerning the reading strategies utilized by early readers together with some of the concepts of reading held by them. These two pieces of information--strategies and concepts of the early readers in conjunction with the environmental factors that may have influenced them to explore print at an early age--should provide teachers and researchers with a more comprehensive view of how young children become readers.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study follows the following format:

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature as background to the study.

Chapter 3 describes the design of the study, including the sample selection, assessment instruments, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data and discusses the results within the framework of the research questions.

Chapter 5 presents a brief summary of the study, its major findings and conclusions together with a portrait of an early reader. Implications of the study and suggestions for further research are also presented.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review surveys the areas of research pertinent to the present study. First, an overview of research that has been conducted on the sociocultural factors influencing early literacy development is presented. Second, the review deals with reading ability focussing on the skills and strategies demonstrated by young children when interacting with print. Third, the chapter discusses some of the research with respect to children's concepts about reading. Fourth, a review of some of the research on early writing acquisition is presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the major findings of the review.

SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS

Prior to the 1960's, research was practically non-existent on children who learned to read without formal instruction. Since Durkin's longitudinal studies (1966), the cornerstone of research on early reading, the knowledge base on early readers has been broadening. Research on early readers has focussed mainly on sociocultural factors that influenced early reading (Durkin, 1966; King and Friesen, 1972; Clark, 1976; Lass, 1982-1983; Anabar, 1985; Schmidt and Yates, 1985; van Lierop, 1985; Grant and Brown, 1986). More recent studies have shifted focus to skills and strategies utilized by young children when processing print.

Teale (1982), Bloome (1985), Thomas (1985), Mason and Allen (1986) considered literacy activities as an interwoven, integral part of culture and society. Bloome (1985) described the sociocultural influences on reading by depicting reading as having three social dimensions: social context (reading involves social interactions with a text), cultural context (reading is an extension of our culture) and socio-cognitive process (through reading, cultural-bound behaviors and information are learned). Overwhelmingly, research on early readers has acknowledged the influence exerted by sociocultural factors on reading achievement.

In exploring the sociocultural background of early readers, research has fallen into two categories: studies that are retrospective in nature (Durkin, 1966; King and Friesen, 1972; Clark, 1976; Anabar, 1985; Grant and Brown, 1986) and investigations that adopt the progressive approach (Lass, 1982-1983; Schmidt and Yates, 1985; and van Lierop, 1985). Retrospective studies examined early reading development by recalling past events while progressive studies involved the documentation of early reading development as it occurred (Bloom, 1985).

Retrospective Studies

One of the more widely quoted studies on early readers was carried out by Durkin (1966). This investigation involved two longitudinal studies on early readers in two cities. The first study involved 49 early readers who were tested for abilities such as reading achievement and intelligence in conjunction with data from their home backgrounds. In addition, follow-up data from their school careers were obtained over a six year period. This

researcher's second study involved 156 early readers from which a control group of 30 early readers were matched with 30 nonreaders. Results of Durkin's two investigations revealed that parent-child interactions around print was an important factor for early reading development.

A study conducted by King and Freisen (1972) compared 31 early readers to 31 randomly selected nonreaders in kindergarten. Children's abilities in both groups were assessed using the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test, subtests from the Gates-MacGinitie Readiness Test and the Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis in kindergarten. One year later, in grade one, they were given subtests of the Durrell Analysis of Reading Ability and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. In addition, information was gathered from parents and teachers through a questionnaire format. Findings indicated that the following factors from the family background displayed importance: mother's educational level, father's occupation, the different types of help received involving specific word knowledge including teaching letter name, letter sound, and telling specific words by request. Early readers in this study had certain characteristics that distinguished them from the nonreaders not only in kindergarten but also in grade one. In kindergarten the factors that differentiated the two groups were word recognition and the ability to learn to read new words whereas in grade one the variables were oral word reading, vocabulary and comprehension.

Similar to Durkin's (1966) investigation, Clark (1976) conducted a longitudinal study on early readers. After assessing 32 early readers over a period of years using a battery of tests and

interviewing their parents and teachers, she concluded that the early reading development was influenced not only by the characteristics of the child (power of concentration, his memory, well-developed language and his motivation) but by an encouraging, interested adult who could provide and build upon experiences relevant to the child's interests.

More recently, Anabar (1985) explored the reading acquisition process of early readers through a series of interviews with the parents of 6 early readers. The conclusions of her study revealed the important role played by parents in the reading development of their children through "spontaneous, intuitive and unplanned" help involving: daily readings while pointing to words, teaching letter names and the sounds of the letters, helping to put words together, playing letter and spelling games. This researcher established the following stages (p. 17) through which the reading acquisition of the early readers evolved:

Stage I A preliminary period of gaining awareness and general knowledge of books and print (starting any time during the first year).

Stage II Learning to identify and name the letters and acquire beginning sight vocabulary (starting around 12-18 months).

Stage III Learning the sounds of the letters (starting around 24-32 months).

Stage IV Putting together words (starting around 24-32 months).

Stage V Active reading from familiar books (starting around 20-30 months).

Stage VI Sounding out short unfamiliar words (starting around 32-34 months).

Stage VII Reading easy unfamiliar books (around 36 months).

Stage VIII Reading for enjoyment of content (around 48 months).

The Grant and Brown (1986) study supported the findings of Durkin (1966), Clark (1972) and Anabar (1985) as they contend that the early readers in their study come from child-centered home environments that are not only very conducive to learning but contain encouraging, supportive caregivers. In their study, Grant and Brown (1986) matched 20 early readers with 20 non-readers in order to discover differences in their home background, home learning experiences and book orientation skills. Data were gathered by administering a book orientation scale to children and through parental questionnaires and interviews. In comparison to the non-readers, Grant and Brown reported that the early readers had superior knowledge of the act of reading and the terminology associated with it. Results indicated that their home environments allowed the early readers not only to monitor their understanding of concepts through questioning their parents but also to seek information from television or print.

Salzer (1984) focused his study on the identification and description of early readers. Parents, children and the investigator worked together in a variety of activities involving letter identification, naming of colors and shapes, counting, writing the child's name, reading environmental print, reading a trade book and a criterion book. Salzer discovered that parents had not planned to teach reading but reading resulted from engaging in literacy

activities with the child, supporting the findings of Durkin (1966), Clark (1972), Anabar (1985), Grant and Brown (1986). He noted that only one child out of the eleven did any kind of extensive reading. Although the author was not able to generalize any common characteristics, the ability to write displayed the greatest inconsistency as some children did little or no writing while others were able to write words.

Using a structured interview, Schnur and Lowrey (1986) gathered information about the 24 early readers in order to define some characteristics of early readers. The investigators noted parents of these youngsters assisted their children in reading-related areas by frequently providing help with word identification, the meaning of words and occasionally providing help with printing and the sounds of the letters. In addition, these parents indicated that their children had exceptional memories.

Progressive Studies

The studies that were progressive in nature involved reporting the reading acquisition of a child by the mother while it was happening. Lass (1982-1983) documented the reading development of her son from birth to age 3. From birth Lass' son was exposed to a literate environment where parents only assisted in reading activities when help was requested. He had access to books, crayons, paper and plastic letters and was read to frequently. She noted that he began to read by reading signs and labels in books and enjoyed selecting his own reading material. She felt that the desire to read was an important aspect in beginning reading. She concluded that her son's reading had three positive outcomes: it built his

confidence, gave him a degree of self-sufficiency and expanded his oral language.

Schmidt and Yates (1985) reported the reading development of Yates' son from 22 months to 48 months. They documented the literacy activities participated in together with his reactions to them. They concluded that at 48 months he has a great deal of knowledge about reading including knowing how to handle books, reading involves seeking meaning and learning new ideas, and reading is a pleasant activity involving the whole family.

In her report on her daughter's literacy development, van Lierop (1985) examined the processes that led to her daughter's early reading ability by recounting her daughter's reading development from 20 months to 5 years. Her daughter had access to books and was read to from an early age. Once letters of the alphabet were known, flashcards were made of familiar words and stories were written by her parents involving one of her favorite stuffed animals. This story writing evolved from the parent writing the story, to the child dictating the story, to the child writing her own stories. Her mother felt that the stories written by her parents together with the books read to her formed the foundation of her daughter's reading development. She concluded that her daughter was an early reader due to literacy being "woven into the entire fabric of her early life" (p. 73).

To contrast literacy learning in the home and in school Juliebo (1985) observed five kindergarten children in their homes and in the school setting. The researcher found that literacy interactions in the home and school differed greatly. In the home the literacy

interactions involved mediated cultural activities initiated by the child whereas the school's literacy activities were teacher-directed reading readiness materials.

Brailsford (1986) conducted a study to describe the reading experiences of three High Print Aware kindergarteners and three Low Print Aware kindergarteners within a variety of settings. The investigator discovered that the children's varying experiences influenced their understanding of the reading process. The High Print Aware children had homes where they were exposed to more literacy experiences than the Low Print Aware youngsters, resulting in High Print Aware subjects making more rapid progress along the reading continuum in the school setting than their Low Print Aware counterparts.

Learning to Read

Forester (1977), Hoskisson (1979), Teale (1982), Thomas (1985) and Fagan (1987) have tried to explain how early readers learn to read without formal instruction. Hoskisson (1979) and Forrester (1977) noted the importance of oral language in learning to read as oral language is the basis from which the early reader constructs knowledge about written language. They both emphasized the importance of story reading in the development of early reading for they contend that listening to stories allows children to develop an understanding of written language.

Teale (1982), Thomas (1985) and Fagan (1987) suggest learning to read is a social process resulting from interactions between the print and the child. As children learn to read, these interactions with print are regularly mediated by another person,

usually one of the child's parents. These researchers all contend that early readers have acquired reading through an "interactive" process involving unintentional teaching and accidental learning.

Heath (1982) studied three literate communities in the United States representing three different socio-economic classes. Her study focused on literacy events with young children in each community. She discovered that children in each community were exposed to three different patterns of language use which result in three different patterns of adjustment to school. The children from white middle class homes were more successful at school literacy tasks than their peers from the other two communities. Heath contends that the parents of the former children engage in language and literacy tasks in the home which closely mirror school language and literacy instruction.

Reporting on emergent literacy, Hall (1987) concluded from the literature reviewed that the following conditions are crucial in literacy development: (1) an environment where literacy is considered important, (2) an environment where there is literacy modelling and (3) an environment that provides not only the opportunity to practise literacy activities but also acknowledges its significance. Research conducted on early readers also supports the importance of these three conditions in literacy learning.

Summary

All investigations mentioned in this section denote early reading as being significantly influenced by a literate home environment which is conducive to learning and contains a supportive, interested individual. In addition, research reported that

early readers showed interest in print. Research on early readers supports the theory that early reading is an "interactive" process. In most cases parents did not set out to teach their child to read but early reading was an outgrowth of the youngster's exposure to literacy activities which were mediated by a supporting, interested individual.

This present study in part is similar to those of Durkin (1966) and Clark (1976) as it employed a parental questionnaire that was adapted from the parental questionnaire used by the just mentioned researchers. In this present study the researcher investigated the sociocultural background of six early readers using the retrospective approach as the details of the home background were examined after the events had taken place. This present research, however, does differ from the previously mentioned studies as those investigations did not examine the strategies used by early readers when reading. One of the purposes of the present investigation is to examine the strategies early readers employ when interacting with print.

READING ABILITY

Skills/Abilities

Recent research on the reading ability of early readers has focussed on the following two areas: the skills/abilities that differentiate them from beginning readers and the strategies they utilize when reading.

The previously mentioned studies by Durkin (1966), King and Friesen (1972), Clark (1976) and Schnur and Lowrey (1986) did

examine some abilities of early readers as a part of the testing procedure for their research. Durkin (1966) and Clark (1976) confirmed each others' findings that early readers could concentrate for long periods. Durkin (1966) and Schnur and Lowrey (1986) found that they had good memories while Clark (1976) contended they had strong auditory memories. King and Friesen (1972) discovered kindergarten readers differed from nonreaders in intelligence, visual discrimination, letter name knowledge, word recognition and rate of learning even though a year later they only differed in higher levels in word reading, vocabulary and comprehension.

Several other studies have been conducted for the sole purpose of identifying skills that characterized early readers. Evans and Smith (1976) examined 19 early readers to determine if any psycholinguistic and perceptual-motor test scores were consistently above average or if these children were average or below average on any of the tests. Each child was tested using the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA), the Colarusso-Hammill Motor-Free Test of Visual Perception and Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude (DTLA). Findings indicated that these children were superior on sound blending, visual sequential memory and word recognition skills.

In 1982, Patel and Patterson assessed 20 early readers using a battery of tests consisting of a reading test, language development test, intelligence test and tests related to metalinguistic processing to determine their psycholinguistic development. They reported that

early reading acquisition is not related to general intelligence or to speech processing.

To identify some skills/abilities of early readers, Backman (1983) examined 24 early readers, 24 nonreaders and 24 grade two students to determine the differences in speech-sound segmentation, blending and discrimination among the three groups. The researcher discovered that none of the skills assessed were prerequisites for beginning reading.

In another study, Jackson and Cleland (1984) gave 87 early readers a battery of tests consisting of a reading comprehension test, tests of reading, verbal ability, short term memory, and a battery of oral reading selections for the purpose of defining patterns of strengths and weakness in early readers. Results indicated that early readers had higher levels on comprehension skills than on recognition of words in isolation.

While the preceding studies investigated the skills/abilities suggested as being necessary for early reading, Caldwell (1985) investigated reading achievement. In her investigation she matched 13 early readers with 11 non-readers, using selected subtests from the Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty and the Concept Assessment Scale. Findings indicated that in early readers, listening comprehension is better than reading comprehension; however, vocabulary, oral and silent reading are all approximately at the same level. The researcher also reported that scores for reading words in context are slightly higher than scores for reading isolated words.

In reviewing research on emergent literacy, Mason and Allen (1986) concluded that emergent literacy develops along a continuum

involving two components: phonological awareness and story understanding which are acquired not only incidentally but through adult-directed activities both at home and at school. In addition, Ehri (1985) based on a number of studies she conducted on reading and spelling acquisition in children concluded that phonemic awareness may be a result of learning to read. Perfetti (1984) took this idea a step further suggesting that "a child learning to read is helped by the early emergence of some levels of phonemic awareness and that deeper levels of phonemic awareness may be the consequence of learning to read" (p. 51).

Summary

Although the above research has tried to identify certain skills/abilities which would distinguish the early reader from other readers, researchers have failed to define any skill/ability which would help them explain why some children learn to read without systematic instruction. After reviewing the literature on early readers, Jackson (1988) reached the same conclusion. "Precocious" readers do not display any skill that is unique to the group but they exhibit a diversity of skills that are individualistic. Perhaps it is as Backman (1983) states, "...there are probably very few real prerequisites to reading acquisition. Instead, there may be an infinite number of facilitators, which may even come hand in hand with the reading experience itself" (p. 478).

Word Recognition

For the purposes of this study, the research reviewed focussed upon word recognition with respect to identifying words in isolation and in context.

Testing a group of 50 kindergarteners and 50 first graders on identifying words in isolation, Marchbanks and Levin (1965) found that both groups chose the first letter as the most salient feature in identifying a word with the final letter being next in importance. However, in another study conducted by Williams, Blumberg and Williams (1970) with kindergarteners, first graders and adults, the researchers discovered that only the first graders supported the findings of the Marchbanks and Levin's research. They found that the kindergartens did not consistently use the cue selections while the adults used a variety of strategies.

Several studies have compared children's ability to identify words in isolation and words in context. A common finding in this research is that children can recognize more words in context than they can in isolation. In probably the most well known study in this area, Goodman (1965) had 100 children in grade one, two and three read a word list and a selection from which the words had been taken. He found that the subjects were able to read more words in context than in isolation.

MacMullen (1980) investigated the responses of 80 grade two children for words in context and words in isolation. Subjects were tested using a word list, oral reading selections and comprehension questions. This study supports the conclusion of Goodman that children recognize more words in context than in isolation. In addition, MacMullen reported that the subjects depended more on the graphic cues for words in isolation than for words in context.

A study conducted by Negin (1981) involved 102 subjects in grade one and three who were required to read and reread the same

list of words, read a list preceding a story and read a story preceded by a list of words taken from the story. Findings demonstrated that better scores were achieved on the list-story than on the list-list.

Summary

Based on the studies presented in this section, it may be assumed that the first letter is the salient feature when young children identify words in isolation. Young children are more proficient at identifying words in context than in isolation.

Strategies

Only recently has research investigated the strategies employed by early readers when reading; consequently, very limited research exists in this area.

Pinson (1982) investigated the reading ability of four early readers. Two were in preschool; two in preparatory school. The subjects were given a battery of tests: the Daniels and Diack Standard Reading Test, the Gates-McKillop Diagnostic Test and reading passages from Goodman and Burke Reading Miscue Inventory. Six months later the subjects were again tested using the same battery of tests. It was discovered that the readers were at varying reading levels and demonstrated different patterns of strengths in skills and reading strategies suggesting that reading skills and strategies are developmentally interwoven. Pinson found that motivation was an important factor in the reading ability of the children influencing their reading strategies and their reading level.

In the same year, Pinson (1982) reported on the early reader in the above study who was the most proficient in reading. She discovered that when reading, although he had the ability to use the

three cueing systems, he relied mainly on the syntactic and semantic cues when processing print.

Allen (1983) analyzed her four year old daughter's miscues on the Ginn Informal Reading Inventory. She concluded from the few miscues generated that her daughter was using an interactive process while reading as neither the top-down nor bottom-up theory could describe how she interacted with print.

In the Malicky & Norman study (1985), 38 kindergarten early readers were asked to read passages until they reached their frustration level. In addition they were requested to retell what they had read. Data analysis was only reported for instructional level. The researchers found that the children were using an interactive process when reading as they were effectively utilizing the three cueing systems (graphic, syntactic and semantic).

As research on the reading strategies of early readers is limited, research in the area of miscue analysis is reviewed.

Biemiller's (1970) study was designed to investigate the oral reading errors of 42 children in grade one over a period of 7 months. From this data he designed a three phase developmental model on the oral reading behavior of beginning readers. In phase one, miscues are contextually constrained. The second phase is typified by a pattern in which half the miscues are non-responses. The third phase is represented by a decrease in non-responses miscues and more errors are constrained by both graphic and contextual constraints.

A study conducted by Weber (1970) analyzed oral reading miscues of 12 high and 9 low readers in grade one. Both groups

produced negligible differences in the percentage of errors that were grammatically appropriate to the sentence in which the miscues occurred. Substitution (80%) was the most common type of miscue, with the remaining miscues being divided almost equally between omissions and insertions.

In 1979, Biemiller focused on the exhibited reading strategies of 59 grade one children from two different reading programs as passages of increasing difficulty were read. Findings indicated that as passage difficulty increased, subjects made more non-response and graphic substitution miscues.

After analyzing the reading miscues of six children over a period of seven years, Goodman (1976) discusses the developmental trends in readers as they acquire reading proficiency. She discovered that substitutions are the most frequent type of miscue, omissions are next and insertions are third. With regards to the graphophonic cues, she found that all readers rely on these cues but as they become more proficient, they rely on these cues as little as possible.

To determine the types of miscues produced, D'Angelo and Mahlios (1983) examined the responses of 30 good readers and 27 poor readers in grade five. Substitutions were found to be the most frequently generated miscue, with omissions next and insertions third. Omission and insertion miscues at instructional or frustrational level produce very little distortion in the text meaning.

Wixson (1979) reviewed studies which employed miscue analysis. She reported a number of patterns that have emerged from this type of research which included: (1) readers usually generate

more miscues that are contextually acceptable than graphophonically similar; (2) beginning readers produce a large number of real word substitutions and non-responses; (3) initially graphophonically acceptable miscue increase until readers become more proficient; (4) good readers make less graphophonically acceptable miscues than do poorer readers; and (5) when readers become more skilled, the number of graphophonically acceptable miscues stabilize.

Another study employing miscue analysis was conducted by Beebe (1980). The subjects were 46 grade four boys who were tested to ascertain the effect substitution miscues have on silent and oral reading comprehension. Results demonstrated that as substitutions increased, comprehension and retelling ability decreased.

To investigate the relationship between passage difficulty and oral reading miscues, Christie and Alonso (1980) analyzed the reading miscues of 17 grade one students and 17 grade three students who were reading at grade level. As the reading material became difficult, attention focussed more on the graphic cues and the language constraints than on meaning. The older subjects were more proficient at using context cues than the younger students.

Clay (1967) conducted a longitudinal study on 100 grade one children. The subjects were divided into high, high middle, low middle, and low reading groups at the end of the school year based on a word recognition task. She noted that the better readers corrected one in three or four errors while the poorer readers in low middle and low groups corrected one in eight errors and one in twenty errors respectively. Clay indicated that the high self-

correction rates observed for the better readers resulted from these readers attending to and relating syntactic, semantic and graphic information efficiently whereas the poorer readers corrected errors less frequently as they were not as efficient at attending to and relating the syntactic, semantic and graphic information.

More recently, D'Angelo (1981) examined the correction behavior of good and poor readers. Subjects for the study included 60 good and 60 poor readers from grades four to eight. At both instructional and frustrational level, good readers corrected a higher percentage of miscues than poor readers. As the passages became more difficult, the poor readers relied more on graphic and less on syntactic and semantic information to make corrections whereas good readers at frustration level corrected a higher percentage of syntactically and semantically unacceptable errors than they did at instructional level.

Summary

In light of the findings reported in this section, substitution is the most common type of miscue followed by omissions and insertions. As substitutions increase, comprehension and the quality of the retellings should decrease. Omissions and insertions generally cause little text distortion. Good readers attend to the three cueing systems more effectively than poorer readers. In addition, good readers also make more corrections because they are proficient users of the three cueing systems. As previously stated, early readers make effective use of the three cueing systems. Hence, it appears that early readers and good readers process print in similar ways.

The present study replicates and expands on the research with respect to early readers. Not only does the present research analyze data at instructional level but it also examines data procured while the subjects were reading passages at frustrational level. The studies reviewed on early readers reveal that these children use an interactive process when they read as they effectively use the three cueing systems (graphic, syntactic and semantic) when interacting with print. The present investigation explores these contentions within a broader variety of textual materials.

CONCEPTS ABOUT READING

Research has examined the perceptions and concepts held by children about reading. The most widely quoted early investigation in this area was conducted by Reid (1966). The investigator interviewed 12 randomly selected five year olds three times about their perceptions of reading. From these interviews, Reid discovered that the only true perception about reading these children held was that they could not read. Other perceptions about reading were very vague.

Downing (1969) replicated and expanded Reid's (1966) study using 13 five year olds. His findings verified Reid's conclusions as the children in his study had only vague understandings of the purpose of reading or how people read.

In order to obtain children's perceptions of the reading process Tovey (1976) interviewed 30 students from grades one through 6.

He discovered that 93% of the children viewed reading as a "word calling" process in which unknown words are sounded out.

Another study conducted by Southgate, Arnold and Jackson (1981) interviewed 50 children aged 7 to 9 as a part of a four-year project investigating the reading progress of children who had mastered the beginning stages of reading. Children viewed reading at home differently from reading in school. At home reading was viewed as being pleasurable, while reading in school was perceived along the lines of word recognition and phonic skills.

As in the above studies, Hayden (1981) examined the perceptions of reading held by 10 good and 10 poor grade one readers but expanded the investigation to compare the perception of reading held by both the children and their parents. Findings indicated that although both good and poor readers consider reading to be a decoding process, the good readers also focussed on the meaning aspect of print. Children held a more constricted view of reading than their parents.

In an article on metalinguistic awareness, Yaden (1984) reviewed a majority of the published research on the concepts about the nature, purposes and processes of reading held by children. From this research he was able to conclude that young children who had numerous experiences with books prior to schooling appeared to have more accurate understanding of the reading process. Children who entered school without previous book experience had a very vague notion of what the reading process entailed and viewed reading within the confines of school activities.

Summary

The research mentioned in this section indicates that most young children have vague notions of what the reading process entails. Their understandings generally center towards the decoding rather than meaning aspects of print. Children who have had experience with books prior to school appear to understand the reading process more accurately than children who have limited book experience before schooling.

WRITING ACQUISITION

To investigate the writings of children Temple, Nathan and Burris (1982) gathered writing samples from children between the ages of four and eight. From their research they were able to define the spelling development of young children as follows: (1) prephonemic, (2) early phonemic spelling, (3) letter name spelling, (4) transitional spelling and (5) correct spelling.

In her longitudinal study of writing and reading development Sulzby (1986) investigated children's literacy development in kindergarten. Nine subjects were chosen for case studies, with three each being judged as either high, moderate or low. From this research Sulzby was able to define and discuss the forms of children's writing. She established six categories: (1) writing via drawing, (2) writing via scribbling, (3) writing via letterlike forms, (4) writing via well-learned units, (5) writing via invented spelling, and (6) writing via conventional English orthography. She concluded

that as literacy develops children sort out oral and written language relationships.

In the above research the authors have established stages through which children's writing evolves, confirming each other's findings. The results of the research by Temple, Nathan and Burris (1982) only differed from Sulzby's (1986) in the names of the stages or categories through which children's writing evolves.

OVERALL SUMMARY

The research presented in this review of the literature has demonstrated that home background has a strong influence on a child's early literacy development. Early reading acquisition usually occurred in homes where interactions between the child and print were mediated by a supportive, interested individual. Interest in literacy was initiated by the child and enhanced and encouraged by a competent, literate individual usually a parent.

Research has shown that children are usually more successful at identifying words in context than words in isolation and primarily use the first letter as the salient cue when identifying words in isolation. As children become more proficient readers, they make effective use of the three cueing systems (graphic, syntactic and semantic) when reading text. The most common type of miscue produced when reading is substitutions. As substitutions increase, comprehension decreases. Omissions and insertions generally do not interfere with text meaning.

Young children have a vague notion about the reading process and what it entails. Research on writing acquisition has defined distinct stages through which young children's writing evolves.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

In this chapter the design of the study, the sample selection, the instruments, the procedure, the data collection, and the analysis of the data are described.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is threefold: (1) to determine what strategies early readers use when reading, (2) to establish the concepts of reading held by early readers and (3) to investigate the relationship between the reading process and children's sociocultural environment. To achieve these purposes, the following data were collected: samples of each child's oral reading, retellings of passages read, responses to questions about the passages as well as responses to questions about behavior exhibited while reading. Writing samples were also obtained. The oral reading samples and passage retellings were coded and then analyzed descriptively as were the responses to questions about the exhibited reading behavior and the writing samples. In addition, data emanating from three open-ended interviews, two for the children and one for their parents were obtained. Responses to interviews were also analyzed descriptively. Following the coding and analyzing of data, comparisons across subjects were conducted in an attempt to find specific patterns with respect to early reader profiles.

SAMPLE SELECTION

Children

The sample for this study consisted of six kindergarten children and six of their parents. The children were chosen from two school districts, one rural, and the other urban. Five children came from an urban kindergarten population and one from a rural population (totals 200 and 250 respectively). The child subjects consisted of one boy and five girls, ranging in ages from 5 years 5 months to 6 years 0 months. Although two of the children attended French immersion classes, the language of their homes was English. Five of the children had attended kindergarten for 7 months. One child had recently moved into kindergarten from daycare. Four of the children were the oldest or only child in the family. The other two children were third children in families of four siblings.

Once permission had been received from the districts' superintendents to conduct the study, 14 kindergarten teachers were contacted by telephone or in person and asked to identify those children whom they thought were early readers, that is, children who were already reading. From a pool of eight suggested early readers, permission was obtained by telephone from their parents for these children to participate in the preliminary assessment. Six of the eight children fit the following criteria as early readers for the study: (1) ability to recognize words from a graded word list at or above preprimer level and (2) ability to read fluently a selection from a book classified as an easy reader.

Parents

Although all of the selected children lived with both parents at the time the study was conducted, only one parent of each child was interviewed. The criterion for parent selection was the willingness to be interviewed. The parent subjects consisted of one father and five mothers. Five parents were interviewed at their homes, one at her workplace.

All twelve parents had finished grade twelve with six having post secondary education. Three mothers worked full time outside the home.

INSTRUMENTS

Preliminary Assessment

Eight children were identified as readers by their kindergarten teachers. In order to verify their ability to read within the parameters of the criteria set for the study, preliminary assessments was conducted in a private room in each child's school. Each session, which lasted approximately 15-20 minutes, was tape recorded. Each child was administered the graded word lists on cards and asked to read the words until three errors were made, establishing frustration level for words in isolation. The children were then shown two easy books--Sammy the Seal (Hoff, 1959) and Who Will Be My Friends? (Hoff, 1960) and asked to read one of them. Because some children had read one book, but none had read both, they were asked to read the one that they had not read or that had not been read to them. From the assessment of eight children, six children were chosen as

they met the following criteria: (1) the ability to read the graded word list at or above the preprimer level and (2) the ability to read one of the easy books fluently.

Prior to the session, the children were told that they would be tape recorded and the operation of the tape recorder was demonstrated. They seemed to enjoy hearing themselves on tape: at the end of the session they requested that the tape be replayed. Although the children and the researcher had not met previously, only one child appeared shy.

Bader Reading and Language Inventory (1983)

The Bader Inventory is not a standardized test but has been tested for reliability and validity. The inventory includes a comprehensive battery of tests; however, for the purposes of this investigation, only the graded word lists and graded reading passages were utilized.

This inventory was chosen because it contains graded word lists and graded reading passages ranging from the preprimer level to level 12 with established criteria for instructional and frustrational levels. The word lists of this inventory were used as one of the preliminary assessments to establish that the selected children could read words in isolation beyond the preprimer level. The graded reading passages were employed in order to obtain children's oral reading and comprehension levels at both instructional and frustrational level.

Easy Books

The books Sammy the Seal (Hoff, 1959) and Who Will Be My Friends? (Hoff, 1960) from the the Early I Can Read series were used

to determine the child's early reading ability. One of these two books was used as part of the preliminary assessment.

Questions

After each child read the passages from the Bader inventory, the researcher questioned the child about the reading behavior exhibited while reading. Questions could not be compiled beforehand since the questions to be asked depended on the individual child's reading behavior. For example, if the child repeated a word, the researcher pointed to the repeated words in the passage asking why they had been repeated. Appendix A presents samples of questions asked about reading behavior.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted by means of three separate questionnaires, two for the children and one for parents. The first questionnaire used with the children was entitled Children's Strategies (Appendix B). It was adapted from Goodman and Altwerger (1981) and designed to ascertain the types of strategies early readers use when reading. The second child questionnaire entitled Children's Reading Concepts (Appendix C) was adapted from Goodman and Altwerger (1981) and Southgate, Arnold and Johnson (1981). The purpose of this questionnaire was to determine early readers' perceptions of reading.

A retrospective-interview (Bloom, 1985) was employed to gain insight into the reading development of the six children. The parental questionnaire entitled Parental Interview (Appendix D) was adapted from Durkin (1966), Clark (1976) and Doake (1981). Questions within the questionnaire were grouped into these

categories: child's reading development, activities, family background and characteristics of early readers.

All three questionnaires involved an open-ended format which allowed the interviewer to probe and/or rephrase questions to elicit further information. Reid's research (1966) indicates that probing as a form of questioning is necessary and appropriate when working with young children.

All reading and interview sessions with the children were tape recorded as were the parental interviews.

Writing Samples

Two writing samples were collected on two different occasions from each child. The first sample, provided at the end of the reading sessions, was obtained in response to the researcher's question, "I want you to write something." The second sample, collected after the interview on concepts of reading, was gathered when the researcher said, "I want you to write me a story." (See Appendix E for writing samples)

PROCEDURE

The procedure in this study was as follows:

1. Kindergarten teachers were asked to identify the children whom they thought were reading fluently.
2. After a preliminary assessment of eight children identified as readers by their teachers, six children fit the criteria for the study.
3. Two conferences with each child were conducted in a private room in his/her respective school. The first conference included: (1)

prereading and oral reading of passages until frustration level was reached, (2) the retelling of passages read, (3) answering questions about those passages read, (4) responding to questions about the reading behavior exhibited, (5) responding to the questionnaire Children's Strategies and (6) providing a writing sample. The second conference involved the child responding to the questionnaire Children's Reading Concepts and producing another writing sample.

4. Following the completion of the children's conferences, parents were interviewed using the Parental Questionnaire either at their home or at their workplace regarding their child's reading development.

5. Audio tapes recorded during the conferences and parental interviews were transcribed verbatim. Data emanating from the tapes were coded and analyzed.

DATA COLLECTION

Children

The researcher met with five of the children twice and with one child three times. As this child was very easily distracted, more time was needed to gather the data. On each occasion, each child was taken to a private room where individual sessions lasted approximately 20-25 minutes and were tape recorded. In the first session, the child was first asked to silently read the graded passages and then to read them orally. Each was also told that after reading he/she would be expected to tell about what he/she had read. The children were asked to read progressively more difficult passages

beginning at preprimer level and to continue reading passages until they were no longer able to read with adequate accuracy or comprehension, thus establishing their frustration level.

When the oral readings and comprehension checks had been completed, the children were asked specific questions about the reading behavior they exhibited while oral reading. For example, if the child had made repetitions or corrections while oral reading, the researcher questioned the child by asking, "Why did you repeat these words?" or "Why did you change this word?" They were also asked questions from the questionnaire Children's Strategies. If the children did not appear to understand what the question entailed, an effort was made to obtain a response by rephrasing the question. On occasion, the researcher paraphrased the answers given by the children in order to confirm what the children had said. All subjects in the study received the questions in the same order. Finally, each child was given a piece of lined paper and a pencil and told "I want you to write something." Five children wrote words. One child drew pictures.

When the researcher met each child a second time, the questionnaire Children's Reading Concepts was given orally. Again the questions were asked in the same order for each child and an effort was made to confirm answers by paraphrasing responses or by rephrasing the questions.

During this second conference each child was given another lined piece of paper and a pencil and told "I want you to write me a story." Initially all of the children had trouble with the idea of writing a story. Only one child was able to provide her own topic

and write a story. Two of the children immediately responded "I don't think I can write a story" and "I can't write stories." Three of the children needed help in choosing a topic. One of the children dictated a story to the researcher. For another child, the researcher had to write the beginning of the story before the child would attempt anything himself. Another child wrote one story on her own and then dictated a second one to the researcher.

Parental Interviews

When the data collection with each child was completed, the researcher made an appointment with the parent who had accepted to be interviewed. The interviews, which were held during the day were tape recorded and lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. All consented to having the session tape recorded and seemed comfortable and relaxed during the interview.

The researcher opened the interview by asking parents their views of how their children learned to read and what they thought was the sequence of their child's reading development, questions which were part of the Parental Questionnaire. For those topics not discussed, specific questions from the Parental Questionnaire were used to elicit further information. The researcher paraphrased or rephrased responses to clarify and/or to pursue the subjects' thinking.

All data were collected by the researcher and later transcribed verbatim from the tapes for analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

The oral miscues and the retellings were coded using different procedures. The oral reading miscues were scored according to the Bader Reading and Language Inventory (1983) manual (Appendix F) but were analyzed descriptively using miscue analysis categories (Appendix G) as outlined by Malicky (1986). Information on analyzing miscues is not provided in the Bader inventory manual.

Retellings of stories were first divided into clauses and each clause was subsequently placed in one of Fagan's (1987) four recall categories (See Appendix H for explanation and examples of the coding).

The children's responses to the questionnaires and the writing samples were also analyzed descriptively. In addition, the data from the children's interviews and writing samples were analyzed in conjunction with the passage codings in order to determine the cultural behavior (what children do) with cultural knowledge (what children know). Responses to the questionnaire from the parental interviews were descriptively analyzed. Both children and parental interviews were analyzed for themes, that is, categories of similarities and differences which could be determined across settings. Once all data had been coded, a comparison across subjects was carried out in an attempt to determine general patterns of reading strategies held by early readers and to identify the relationship between the reading process and sociocultural factors.

Validity and Reliability

Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest (1966) contend that a credible way to validate the findings of a study is to use a variety of methods to study the same phenomenon. Data were collected in this study using different collection techniques: reading miscues, retellings of passages, writing samples, questioning children on the reading behavior exhibited, questionnaires for parents on their child's reading development, and questionnaires for the children focussed towards their reading strategies and their thoughts about reading. In order to assure the reliability of the codings of the miscues and the retellings, an inter-rater reliability of 90% was established with a university professor.

SUMMARY

Six kindergarten children and six corresponding parents participated in this study. The children were designated as early readers in a preliminary assessment which measured their ability to read words from a graded word list at or above preprimer level and fluently read a selection from a book classified as an easy reader. After the preliminary assessment, each of the six children performed the following types of activities: silent and oral reading, retelling and answering questions about passages read, responding to questions about the reading behavior exhibited, answering two questionnaires and providing two writing samples. Parents responded to a questionnaire concerning their child's reading development. The purposes of these tasks were to ascertain the processes early readers

employ as they read, the concepts of reading held by early readers and to establish the relationship between the reading process and their sociocultural environment. Data were analyzed descriptively. Results of the the study together with a discussion of these results are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents the findings of the study and relates them to the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The chapter is formatted in the following manner: first, each research question is restated; second, data are provided for each question in separate sections together with discussions of the results emanating from the data; third, each section concludes with a summary of the results. Finally, an overall summary of the chapter is presented.

DATA ANALYSIS

A. Research Question 1

What strategies do early readers use when interacting with print?

I. Words in Isolation

The instructional level for words in isolation ranged from primer to grade level five. The children produced 26 miscues from a total of 260 words. As 4 words were not attempted, only 22 of the 26 miscues were analyzed. The children used both graphic and phonic cues to predict words as indicated by their erroneous responses which were graphically similar (90%) and phonically similar (86%). They were very successful at accessing graphic cues at the beginning of the words as letters were processed from the beginning section of every word. In addition, they analyzed cues

from the middle and from the end portions of words (81% and 86% respectively). These children attempted to analyze letter size units in 18 words, letter clusters in 12 words and syllabic units in 6 words. Only one child produced nonsense words. None made any correction attempts.

Discussion

The results of the analysis of words in isolation indicated that these children brought several resources to bear when meeting words in isolation. They relied not only on linguistic meaningfulness but also on visual information processing to help them predict words in isolation. In relation to linguistic meaningfulness, the majority of these early readers utilized their knowledge of language by giving responses that were only real words. With regards to visual information processing, they employed their graphophonic knowledge to access graphic cues and to associate the appropriate sounds to these accessed cues.

The evidenced lack of monitoring acknowledges their language awareness. Monitoring is initiated when a need for correction is perceived. These children did not perceive this need because their responses were graphically and phonically similar to the text. In addition, the miscues produced were real words. These conditions may have led them to believe that they had given the correct response, thereby, declaring the need for correction and monitoring unnecessary.

Several studies which investigated the reading behaviors of early readers included words in isolation as a measure for analysis. Some of these studies, however, (Durkin, 1966; King and Freisen,

1972 and Blackman, 1983) only gave either the level at which the children were functioning with respect to words in isolation or used isolated words as one of the measures to identify the early readers. Although words in isolation were also used for sample selection in the present study, unlike the the investigations mentioned above, the miscues produced by the children when reading reading isolated words were analyzed to identify the processes the early readers in thus study employs when meeting words in isolation.

On the other hand, Clark (1976) did draw some conclusions regarding words in isolation. This researcher declared that the early readers in her study were able to use decoding skills to "tackle" words they had probably not seen previously in print and also were able to give close approximations to words that they might not even have met in oral language. The children in the present study support the premise that early readers are able to decode since their miscues had high levels of graphic and phonic similarity. The idea, however, that they are able to "tackle" words they have never encountered in print or in speech was not supported as the words lists they read contained words that would be encountered quite frequently not only in print but in every day speech as well.

Studies such as those conducted by Marchbanks and Levin (1965) and Williams, Blumberg and Williams (1970) which investigated nonreaders, beginning readers and proficient readers have disclosed that the beginnings of words are the most prominent graphic cues in word recognition with endings being the next distinctive feature. Gibson and Levin (1975) noted that mistakes made by children on word lists were usually substituted by a real

word rather than a nonsense word. The analysis of miscues for words in isolation by the early readers in the present study indicate similar types of response as the children accessed graphic cues from the beginning of every word with endings being the next salient feature. Furthermore, their responses, in general, also were devoid of nonsense words.

II. Words in Context

This section on words in context is divided into three parts: (a) easy books, (b) passages at instructional level and (c) passages at frustrational level.

a) Easy books.

All six children interacted with the text when reading the easy books used in the initial selection procedures. Each child perused the pictures on each page before reading and made comments emanating from the pictures and text such as, "How come her dress keeps changing?" (Sherry). Paula, after reading "There's no place like home" commented, "That's true, isn't it?"

Figure 1 demonstrates the types of miscues generated by the children when reading the easy books. Every miscue type is represented, although not every child produced miscues in each type. Not only did all children make miscues in the substitution (49%), repetition (22%) and omission (12%) categories but these were also the most frequent type of miscue. Although the substitutions produced were real words, the majority of the substitutions (80%) lead to meaning change. Omission (12%) miscues generally lead to no change in the author's meaning as the children tended to omit words

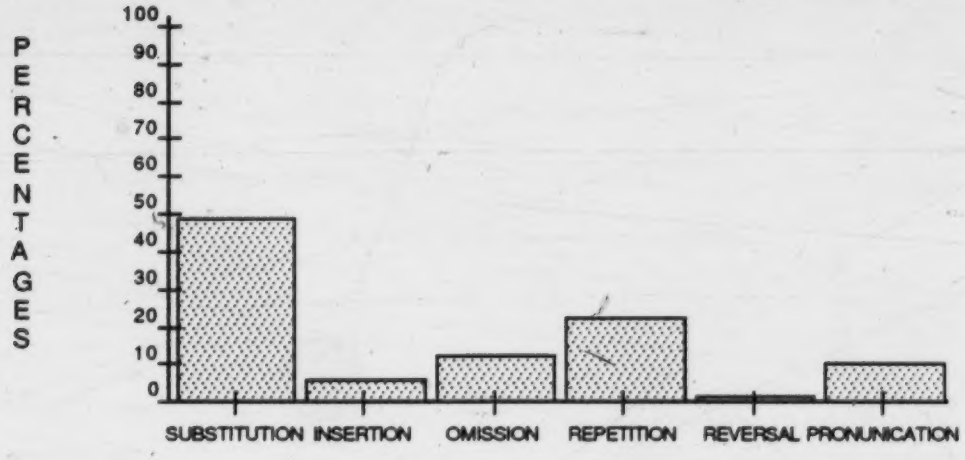

FIGURE 1

MISCUE TYPES EASY BOOKS

that were not essential for understanding of the text. Their insertions (6%) followed a similar pattern.

With respect to the categories of miscues produced by the children *Figure 2 indicates they did not consistently analyze graphic cues (57%) or apply the appropriate sound to the units analyzed (54%). They did, however, rely heavily on their language and background knowledge to predict words as demonstrated by the grammatical (80%) and semantic (78%) acceptability of the miscues. Miscues which were grammatically and semantically acceptable generally resulted in a change to the author's meaning (75%). A closer examination of the data revealed that 3 of the 6 children's

* See Appendix G for explanation of categories. In Figure 2 for the purposes of analysis, Y and P categories are combined. They are also combined in Figure 3, Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 8, and Figure 9.

miscues were generally only compatible with the part of the sentence in which the miscue occurred. Hence, these 3 children made predictions on the basis of small units of meaning leading them to rely more heavily on their own meaning rather than the author's. Nevertheless, all these early readers did show an awareness of attending to the author's meaning as 21% of their miscues were corrected.

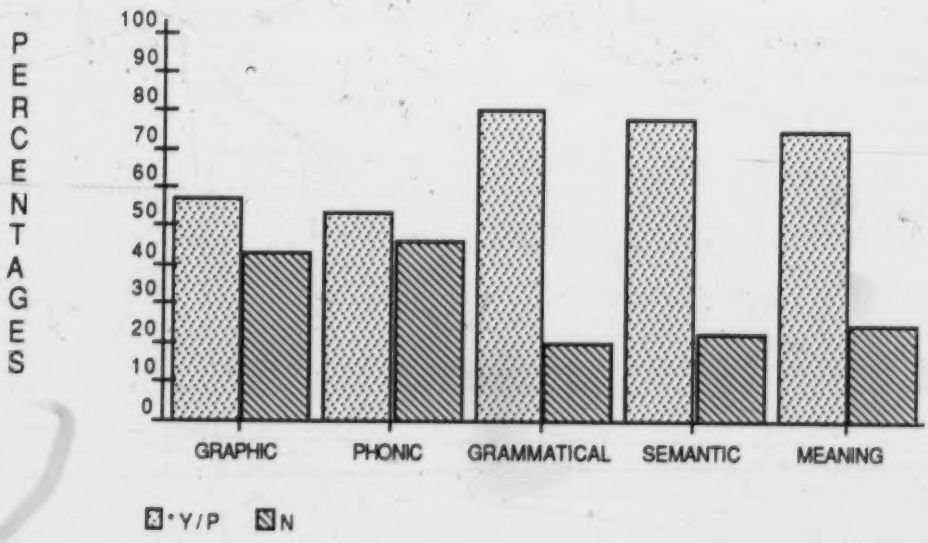

FIGURE 2

MISCUE CATEGORIES EASY BOOKS

Figure 3 demonstrates that miscues were usually corrected when they affected a change in the author's meaning (82%). Corrections were made on words in context as the children based their predictions on the author's meaning, their own language and meaning base together with the visual information. They were more successful reading words in context than in isolation as they had

more information available to help them process print when identifying words in context.

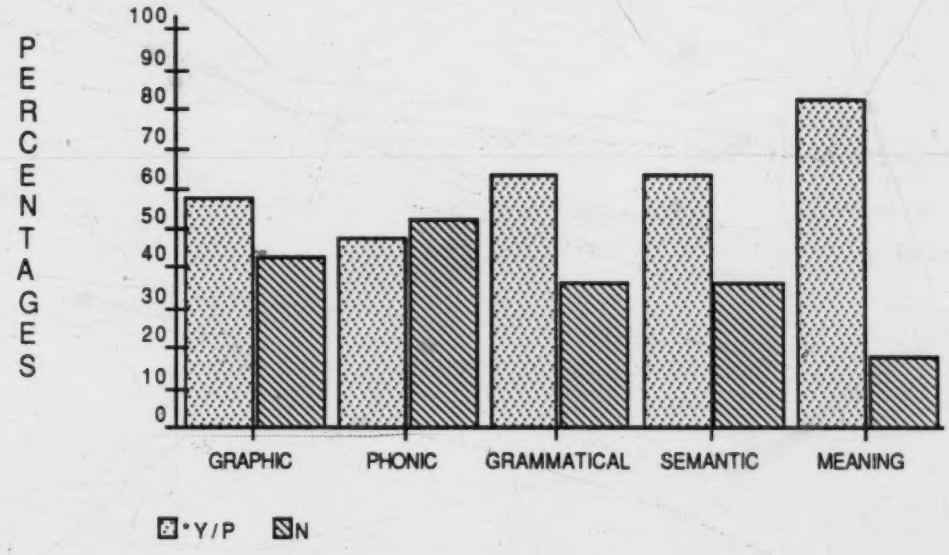

FIGURE 3

CORRECTIONS EASY BOOKS

b) Passages--Instructional level.

The instructional levels for words in context within passages ranged from preprimer to level 6. Every miscue category was represented with all children providing miscues in the substitution category (Figure 4). In addition, substitution (34%) was the most common type of miscue generated. Although a majority of the substitutions were real words (85%), they did lead to a meaning change (80%). Insertions (18%) generally did not interfere with the

meaning of the passage whereas omissions (8%) never led to a meaning change.

FIGURE 4

MISCUE TYPES INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL

Three of the six children had words pronounced (20%) by the researcher. These children seemed to expect help when meeting an unknown word. They either asked the researcher, "What does that say?" or indicated by their expression that they expected help with the word. This dependence on 'outside' help in word identification could possibly be a stage all young readers go through. Alternately, it could also be an indication that these children have not yet formed well-developed independent strategies for coping with unknown words. With respect to the words pronounced by the researcher, 83% were key concept words.

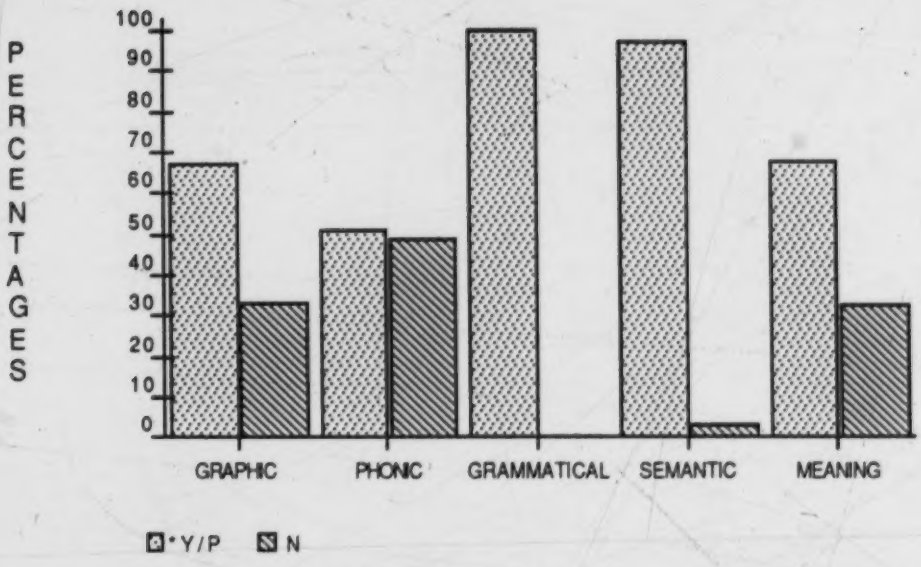

FIGURE 5

MISCUE CATEGORIES INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL

However, these children did not consistently process graphic cues as they only accessed 67% of the cues and were only able to assign the correct sound to 51% of the units analyzed (Figure 5). They relied heavily on their language and background knowledge (grammatical acceptability [100%] and semantic acceptability [97%]) to make meaningful predictions as they read. As their miscues resulted in a change to the author's meaning (68%), they appeared to be making predictions in relation to their own meaning base rather than that of the author. This is demonstrated by the high levels of grammatical and semantic acceptability of their miscues. As demonstrated by Figure 6, the children's corrections (31%) revealed that they did attend to the author's meaning as miscues were

corrected by 4 of the 6 children when they resulted in an author's meaning change (79%).

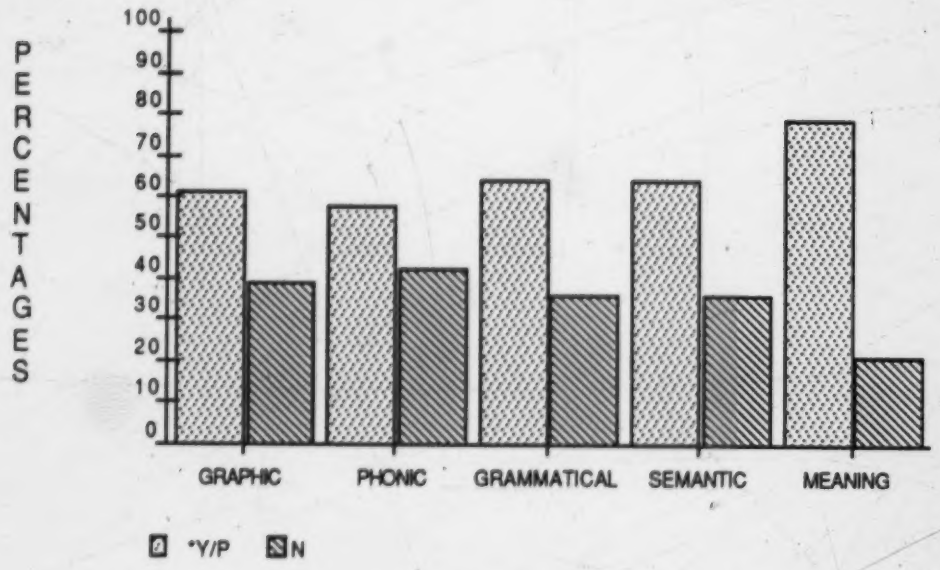

FIGURE 6

CORRECTIONS INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL

c) Passages--Frustrational level.

A range of frustrational levels cannot be given as the researcher did not establish a frustrational level for one children on words in context. According to the preset parameters, testing was to be discontinued when frustration level was met either on words in context or on comprehension. One child met the set criteria for words in context at level six but did not meet the criteria set for comprehension at this level, therefore, at this point testing was discontinued.

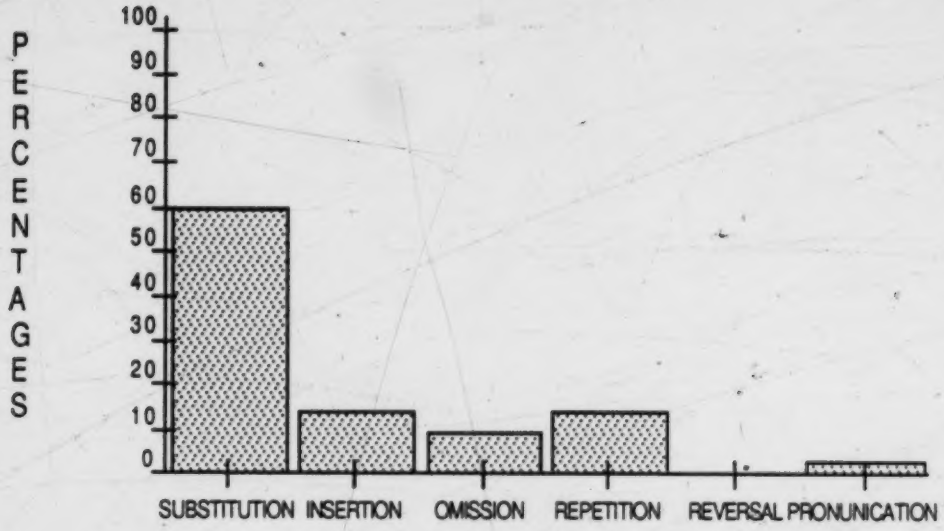

FIGURE 7

MISCUE TYPES FRUSTRATIONAL LEVEL

At frustrational level (Figure 7), there was not one type of miscue that was common to every child. In addition, the reversal category did not contain any miscues. Even though substitution (60%) accounted for the highest number of miscues, 2 of the 6 children did not produce miscues in this category. Although 77% of the substitutions were real words, they generally lead to a change in author meaning. Even though, insertions (14%) usually did not lead to a meaning change, omissions (8%) usually resulted in meaning change.

At frustration level, as noted in Figure 8, the children were not very successful at processing graphic cues (48%) nor at applying the appropriate sound (39%) to the units analyzed. They appeared to rely more on their knowledge of language (grammatical 69%) than their background knowledge (semantic 57%) to help them predict

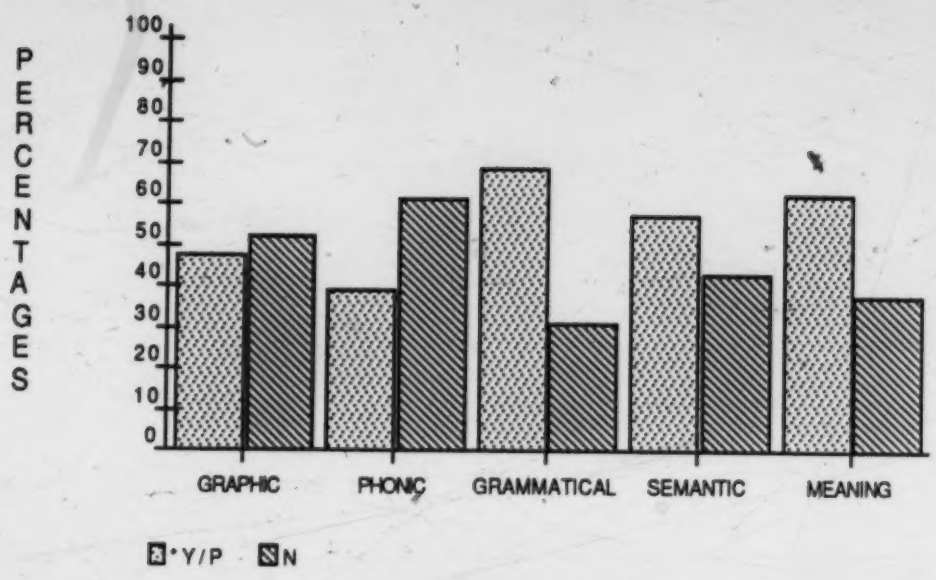

FIGURE 8

MISCUE CATEGORIES FRUSTRATIONAL LEVEL

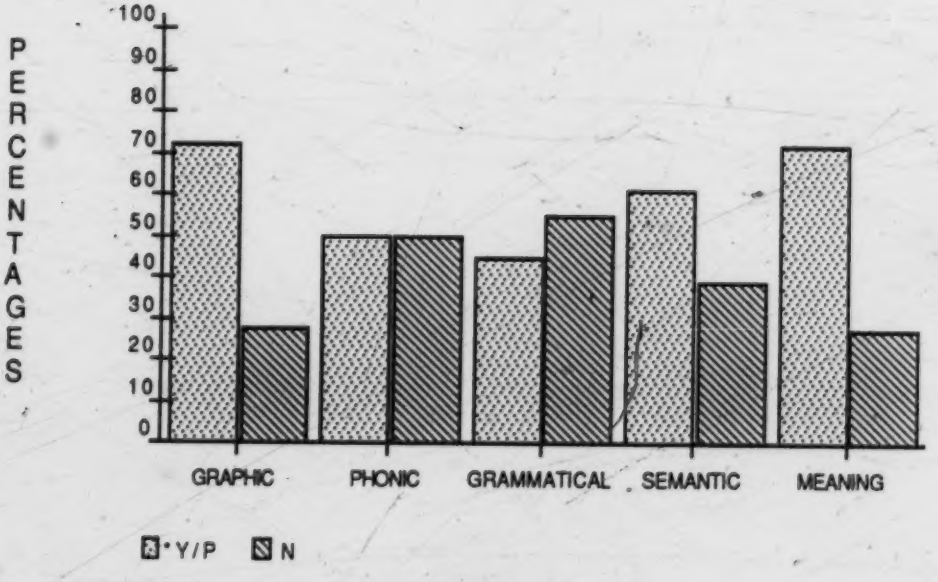

FIGURE 9

CORRECTIONS FRUSTRATIONAL LEVEL

words as they read. At this level the comprehension criteria were not met by 5 of the six children, demonstrating their inability to successfully employ the three cueing systems (graphic, grammatical and semantic) to maintain meaning. Although their corrections (19%) displayed their awareness of the author's meaning, they were not processing sufficient information to gain a meaningful representation of the author's intent (Figure 9).

Discussion

The readers in this study were more successful at identifying words in context than in isolation. This finding is supported by the research of Goodman (1965), MacMullin (1980), Negin (1981) and Caldwell (1985).

The results of the analysis of miscues within easy readers and passages indicated that the most common miscue produced by these early readers was substitution regardless of the type or level of the material read, supporting Goodman's (1976), D'Angelo and Mahlios's (1983) findings that substitution is the most common miscue type produced by good and poor readers. A predominance of the substitution miscues produced by the early readers in this study were real words. Goodman's (1976) found that children substitute real words in the early stages of developing proficiency. Wixson (1979) found in reviewing studies on miscue analysis that beginning readers generated a large number of real word substitutions and non-responses. The children in this study, however, did not produce any non-responses.

The number of substitution miscues produced by the early readers in this study increased significantly at frustrational (60%)

level compared to instructional (34%) level, confirming Beebe's (1980) findings that as as substitutions increase comprehension decreases. Although there were more insertion miscues than omission miscues on both the instructional and the frustrational passages, the reverse trend existed for the easy books. It is possible that the language of the easy readers was more meaningful for the children than the somewhat constrained text of the passages which generally reflected a more expository type of text than a narrative one. Probably the latter is more familiar to the children as a result of exposure to story books in the homes and therefore their monitoring with respect to omissions is understandable. In the Goodman (1976), D'Angelo and Mahlios's (1983) studies there were always more omissions than insertions. D'Angelo and Mahlios's (1983) also discovered that the omissions and insertions did not distort the author's meaning. Regardless of the type of text, insertions and omissions in this present investigation confirm the findings of the latter study as the miscues generally did not interfere with meaning. Insertion and omission miscues tended to be words that were not essential to understanding the text.

The children's high scores on grammatical and semantic acceptability on the easy books and on the passages demonstrate their effective use of both language and background knowledge in predicting words as they read. A group of studies (Weber, 1970; Beimiller, 1970; MacMullen, 1980; Malicky and Norman, 1985) have demonstrated that a high proportion of miscues made by readers are grammatically and semantically acceptable. The miscue data of the early readers in this investigation support these findings regardless

of the type or reading level of the material. Wixson (1979) after reviewing studies conducted on miscue analysis suggests that the grammatically acceptable miscues are usually higher than the semantically acceptable miscues by 20%. The miscues of the children in this present study confirm these conclusions. However, the children under discussion only produced minimal differences between the two categories.

The early readers in the present study demonstrated that they were attuned to meaning as an important aspect of reading as indicated by their corrections where a majority were made due to a change in the author's meaning. At instructional level, they corrected 31% of all the miscues generated of which 79% corrected were due to a change in the author's meaning. In the Malicky and Norman (1985) study which analyzed miscues of early readers at instructional level, 33% of errors were corrected with 86% being corrected due to a change in the author's meaning. The early readers in both studies demonstrated their self-regulatory behavior while reading, in addition to revealing their close attention to author meaning.

Only 8% of the miscues were nonsense words, another indication that the children relied on meaning to predict words in context. However, they were not always constrained by the text meaning since their miscues generally resulted in meaning change. MacMullen (1980) reported similar findings. In the Malicky and Norman (1985) investigation of miscues at the instructional level, 80% of miscues were grammatically acceptable leading to a change in the author's meaning (41%). The early readers in this study also

relied on language to predict words, although they were not always constrained by the text. In other words, these children depended on their knowledge of the structure of language rather than text meaning to predict words.

The subjects in this study had lower percentages on graphic similarity than on grammatical and semantic similarity, confirming the results of studies by Biemiller (1970), Weber (1970), Clay (1982) and Malicky and Norman (1985). They were also more efficient at processing the graphic cues than at associating the appropriate sound to the units analyzed. Beimiller (1979) discovered that children in grade one increased their use of graphic information when reading difficult material. The children presently under discussion do not support this conclusion as they were more effective analyzing graphic cues when the reading passages were at instructional level than at frustration level. It must be noted, however, that these children did make use of graphic information. On words in isolation they had very high percentages on processing the graphophonic cues. When predicting words in context, they have more cues such as language, background knowledge and meaning to use; so it appears that they relied more on these other cues than the graphophonic cues. Using graphophonic cues to help predict words in isolation demonstrated that they could use graphic cues effectively. What is particularly salient about this finding is that the children in this present study had not received formal instruction. It would appear that as children become readers they learn to clue into the graphophonic cues of the language. Perfetti (1984) suggested that in beginning readers, phonemic knowledge and learning to read go

hand in hand with each other. The subjects in the present research support this suggestion as these children showed an awareness of phonemic knowledge even without systematic instruction.

The early readers in this study were proficient users of the three cueing systems (graphic, grammatical and semantic) when interacting with print at instructional level. They were able to make meaningful predictions utilizing the three cueing systems, resulting in an adequate comprehension level. At frustrational level they were not as effective at employing the three cueing systems. This ineffectiveness at frustration level led to insufficient processing of information resulting in inadequate comprehension. It appears that as the reading material became more difficult, they were not as effective users of the grammatical and semantic cueing systems as they had been at instructional level. Information they needed to aid them in predicting words at frustrational level was not adequate, resulting in more miscues. As the number of miscues increased, comprehension decreased.

III. Comprehension

Five of the six children needed prompting before any recalls were given. At times, the researcher had to give as many as three prompts before recalls were forthcoming. Such behavior may indicate that retelling was not a procedure the children were accustomed to and may suggest that the retelling of a story in one's own words is a school activity to which children are usually introduced as they learn to read within the school context. As these children had learned to read without formal instruction, the lack of exposure to this type of activity could possibly account for their

reluctance and/or difficulty retelling what they read. Five of the six children generated more information as a result of the researcher's questions than they were able to produce through their self-generated retellings. The recall clause units of these five children ranged from 1-6 units per passage.

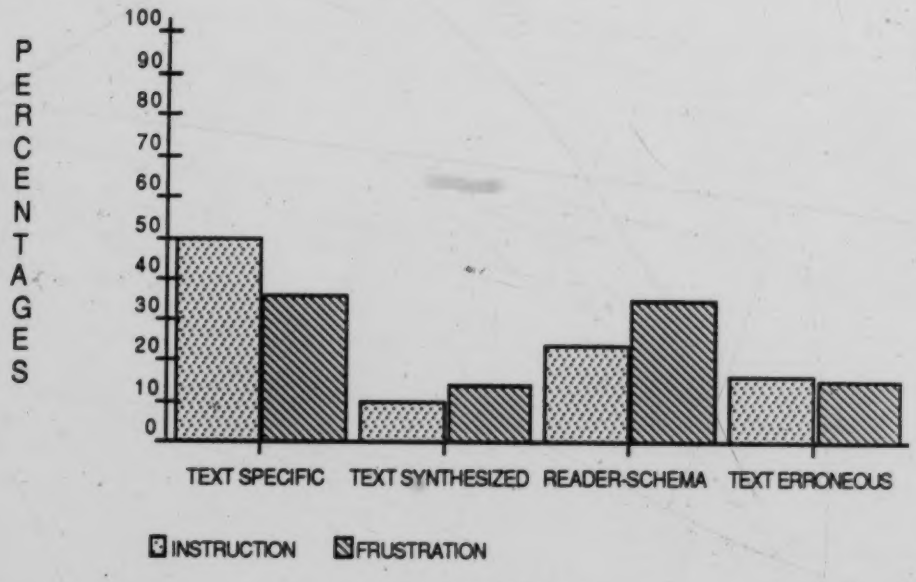

FIGURE 10

RECALLS INSTRUCTIONAL AND FRUSTRATIONAL LEVELS

a) Instructional level.

The instructional levels on comprehension ranged from preprimer to level 5. As presented in *Figure 10, the category of text specific received the highest percentage of recall units (50%). These recalls appear to demonstrate the children's attempts to clue into the author's meaning. Results from the text synthesized and reader-

* See Appendix H for explanation of the categories.

schema categories indicate that they used their background knowledge as they made inferences (24%) from the text and synthesized ideas (10%) from the text. The children produced erroneous units (16%) showing that they were not always constrained by the author's meaning.

b) Frustrational level.

The frustration levels on comprehension ranged from primer to level six. Figure 10 also presents the results of the data analysis of the recall units at frustration level. At this level, the youngsters were not able to recall as much specific text information (36%) but were relying more on their background knowledge as they generating more inferences (35%) from the text and synthesizing more text ideas (14%).

Discussion

Five of the 6 children appeared to have difficulty retelling the passage read in their own words. The researcher's questioning was able to produce more information than the youngsters generated on their own. Unaided recalls did not produce as many memories as researcher's questioning; possibly because, as has been previously suggested, retelling a story was not an usual activity for them. It is possible, furthermore, that these children did not produce many recalls without assistance because they had been told the researcher would be asking questions.

At instructional and frustrational levels the early readers seemed to call upon different processes to create meaning from print. At instructional level there was a heavier reliance on text information, whereas at frustration level they seemed to use a

combination of text information and background knowledge to derive meaning from print. Although analysis of the recall data suggests that they used different processes to comprehend print at either level, overall analysis of the recall data demonstrated that the children possess successful strategies that enable them to be effective processors of print.

The results of the recall data of the present study support the findings Malicky and Norman (1985) who analyzed recall data at instructional level only. These authors state that early readers use both text information and background knowledge in processing print to create meaning. Similar findings occurred in the present study.

IV. Reading Behavior Response Questionnaire

Every child except one was able to give responses to the questions asked by the researcher about the behaviors they had shown while reading orally. When first questioned about a certain type of behavior they had exhibited when reading, usually the child's immediate response was to reply, "I don't know". When the question was rephrased, a more comprehensive response was obtained. Four children indicated their awareness that they had pronounced the words incorrectly as the following examples indicate, "I already knew that word and I had made a mistake." (Sherry) and "I didn't think it was right" (Melanie).

Ken was questioned as to how he was able to pronounce a word when reading orally that he had been unable to pronounce when reading silently as indicated by his request during silent reading announced, "I just looked at it and said it." Sherry was asked why she had asked the researcher how to pronounce some words,

whereupon she responded, "I didn't know them." When Paula was asked why she had repeated words she replied, "Because I get my words wrong. I thought I had got it wrong." This same child when asked why she had inserted a word responded, "I just didn't notice that there wasn't a 'do'." Melanie was asked why she had first pronounced 'playground' as 'play around' and had later pronounced it correctly remarked, "I said 'play around' and that starts with an 'a' and playground starts with a 'g'."

Discussion

The responses of these five children show that they were cognizant of what was happening as they read. Even though they were not able to give indepth explanations, the answers they supplied provided deeper insight into the reading processes and strategies employed by these early readers. For example Melanie's comments about the mispronunciation of 'playground' demonstrated an awareness of graphic cues. They were also aware when they mispronounced a word as they declared words were corrected because they were not right. When prereading a passage, Ken indicated that he did not know the word 'accident.' However, when reading the same passage orally, he correctly pronounced the word 'accident.' His ability to correctly identify a word when oral reading which he could not recognize when reading silently suggests that he was able to use context clues.

V. Writing Samples

Data from the first writing sample consisted of five children writing words and Chris drawing pictures even though she had remarked, "I think I can write doll. I'll write everything I can." Four

of the five children wrote their names with three of them proceeding further to write the names of family members. Four of the children wrote words such as, "Easter, and, school, dinosaur" (See Appendix E for words written). Five children wrote a total of 41 words with only one word spelled incorrectly. The children wrote their words with a mixture of upper and lower case letters ignoring the lines on the paper provided.

When the children were asked to write a story for their second writing sample, the researcher did not perceive the same willingness to produce print as they had shown for the first writing sample. Five of the six children seemed reluctant to write. Three of them remarked that they couldn't write a story, "I don't know how to write a story." (Ken) "I'm going to write something but I don't think I can write a story." (Paula) and Melanie asked, "Can I draw pictures?"

Since the results of these writing samples had many idiosyncrasies, individual rather than group examples will be described for analysis. To adequately interpret the results of the writing data, comments with respect to the individual performance of the children will be presented in conjunction with commonalties found among the group.

Only Sherry was able to choose a topic and begin writing without encouragement from the researcher. Two other children decided on a topic after some discussion. The researcher had to suggest the topic of Easter and write the first sentence in Ken's story but he was able to finish it. Sue dictated her story when it became apparent to the researcher that she would not write more than

isolated words. She was reluctant to write because she could not spell the words.

All children depended on the researcher for help with spelling. They either requested the researcher to spell the word or sought confirmation of correct spelling for the words they had written. While they wrote, the children voiced either the letter sound or the letter name of every letter in each word. As each word was completed in their story, they re-read to monitor what was already written. Their stories were written in a mixture of upper and lower case letters. The length of the stories ranged from 1-3 sentences with four of the six children producing compositions of only one sentence (See Appendix E for stories). Only one child showed an awareness of punctuation.

Discussion

The writing samples revealed a great deal about these children's knowledge about the forms of print. They displayed an awareness of space as indicated by word units. They demonstrated their knowledge of how writing is arranged on a page by starting at the left side of the page, by continuing in the correct direction and by proceeding to subsequent lines. They demonstrated their phonemic awareness by their voicing of the sounds of the letters as they spelled the words when writing their story. This voicing was not evident when writing isolated words as they only wrote words they knew, eliminating the need for voicing.

Researchers Temple, Nathan and Burris (1982) and Sulzby (1986) have studied writing samples of young children (ages 4-6). They have established similar levels through which children's

writing evolves. The writings of the children in this study demonstrated that their writing has evolved to the level where there is a mixture of conventional and invented spelling. Temple, Nathan and Burris (1982) referred to it as the transitional level while Sulzby describes it as writing via "invented spelling". Each child showed awareness of the English orthography in both writing samples as they were very concerned that words were spelled correctly. Only one word, which had a letter omitted, was spelled incorrectly in the first writing sample.

Sulzby (1986) reported that when children are asked to "write anything you can", they write a list of known words which include their names, family members and common names. These list are written in columns and written in conventional spelling and conventional letter formation. The children in this study generally followed this format. Five of the six children listed the words they knew which included their names, family members and common names. Four of them wrote their words across the page instead of columns but all wrote with conventional spelling and conventional letter formation.

However, when these children were asked to write a story, a reluctance to write was observed as they assumed that they could not perform this task. They appeared to be more comfortable in writing words than in story writing. This reluctance to write a story may possibly be lack of experience in this type of activity or perhaps they were not sure about what was requested of them. They demonstrated that in order to write a story the words had to be spelled correctly. Their awareness of correct spelling demonstrated

their awareness of the English orthography which probably is more prevalent in these children than in others their age because they can read. This behavior confirms Ehri's (1985) contention that "when children learn more about letter-sound relations and about phonemic segmentation and decoding, their spellings become more complete phonetically and the letters they choose are more conventional" (p. 6).

Five of the children in this study would be classified as "more mature" writers by Sulzby (1986) as they wrote with a combination of conventional and invented spelling. Salzer (1984) reported that some of the early readers in his investigation did little or no writing while others were able to write words. In this present study, not only were all the children able to write words but five children showed an awareness of sentence structure as they were able to compose a sentence. Only two children displayed some awareness of story structure in their writing samples. Their stories had some semblance of a beginning, middle and an end.

VI. Children's Strategies Questionnaire

When the children were questioned about what they did when they met a word unfamiliar to them, four of them stated they would ask someone. The researcher explored the topic further by asking the children what they did when there was no one around to ask. Two of them noted they would skip the word while two other said they would sound it out. The researcher asked how they figured out words. Three children declared they did not know. The others contended they would either ask their mothers, look at them and say them or get the sound of the word. In order to teach someone to

read, four of the children stated they would tell the non-reader the words.

The questions relating to what was easy and hard for them to read led to a variety of answers. Three children stated that the short words were easy to read because they are short, easy words; the long words are hard as they are hard to remember. Responses given by the remaining children to these questions were very individualistic. Melanie did not know what was easy for her when she read but she was aware that words she did not know were hard. Sherry said she found it easy to read when she sounds them out but found it hard when she forgot to sound out the words. Sue noted she found it easy to read big letters as they are easy to see but small letters were difficult to read as she could not see them.

Discussion

Reid (1966) and Downing (1969) in their investigations of beginning readers, found the children seemed to be confused about what the reading process involved. In this study, however, the children demonstrated their consciousness of the reading process by their ability to answer specific questions about their reading behavior. Grant and Brown (1986) discovered that the early readers in their study had a better understanding of the reading process and reading terminology than their non-reading counterparts. The children in the present investigation generally demonstrated a good knowledge of what is involved in the reading act.

This questionnaire also provided valuable information concerning the children's reading strategies. When meeting an unknown word, their strategy was to ask someone, usually their

mother or father. If left to their own resources, two would skip it and the other two would sound it out. The reliance on another person to help them with reading is again evident in the answers to the question about how they figured out word. Three of the children did not know how they did this, possibly indicating that they did not have a strategy developed to perform this task. Alternately, it is possible they were not able to verbalize the process. In other words they may know what strategy to use but cannot explain how they use it. Because they frequently relied on competent readers to tell them the words, they did not have to figure out words. This reliance on others for help with unknown words might indicate that with beginning readers it might be more profitable to tell them the words than teaching word recognition skills. Clark (1972) had similar responses from the early readers in her study. If the children met an unknown word while reading, their first action was to ask one of their parents. If no one was available, they gave the following responses: "just go to the next word and see if I know what it was, spell it out, sound it first, just keep trying or tell my mother and she'll tell me. If she's not there I just miss it out and take it syllable by syllable that's what my Dad told me" (p. 51). In the Southgate, Arnold and Johnson (1981) investigation, asking help from an adult was also the most common mentioned strategy. The present study confirms these findings.

Summary

Five of the six children in the present study achieved the same or higher levels on words in context than on words in isolation or comprehension (See Appendix I for levels). This implies that their

word recognition skills/strategies in context were better developed than either word recognition in isolation or comprehension. At instructional level they effectively used the three cueing systems (graphic, syntactic and semantic), however, at all levels there appeared to be a heavier reliance on the syntactic and semantic than on the graphic, demonstrating their proficiency at using context clues.

Substitution was the most common type of miscue generated. When they substituted words, real words were used. As substitutions increased, comprehension decreased. In addition, these youngsters were not always constrained by the text. Their self-regulatory behavior, however, demonstrated that they were attuned to the author's meaning as corrections generally were made because a change in text meaning had been perceived. They employed a combination of text and background knowledge in processing print to create meaning.

Their writing samples demonstrated the child's awareness of the form of print. They appeared to be more comfortable performing the activity where they were asked to write something than in the activity where they were asked to write a story. In their writing they used invented and conventional spelling, showed development of the idea of word units, sentence structure and knowledge of page and line arrangement. They were aware when words were spelled incorrectly.

B. Research Question 2

What concepts of reading are held by early readers?

Children's Reading Concepts Questionnaire

Five of the six children stated they liked to read and all declared that they read at home usually in their bedrooms. They read a variety of books which included adventure stories, nursery rhymes, the dictionary, storybooks. It should be noted that two of these children liked to read old readers--Jack and Janet and On My Own. All children reported they had their own books at home; however, only two children indicated they read books from the library. For five of the children, reading was not a family activity, even though three of them stated they were still read stories by one of their parents. Four children reported that they learned to read by themselves. They accomplished this by "sounding out the words" (Melanie), "practised and practised and then I got the idea" (Chris) and "trying to get the words together" (Paula). The six children believed they were good readers either because their parents had told them they were or because they felt they could read "pretty good." They all thought that grown-ups should be able to read as three of them stated that grown-ups need to be able to read in order that they can read to their children. Two others stated that reading was an adult activity. Five of the six believed that children should read with four of them believing that children should learn to read as it a skill they will need as adults.

Discussion

All children perceived themselves as readers. Five of the six children enjoyed reading and stated personal preferences for reading material. These children liked to read a variety of texts, indicating

the importance of exposing young readers to various texts. Although these children had access to books in their home and enjoyed reading, they did not consider reading to be a family activity. Generally, these early readers learned to read by themselves using a variety of strategies. These youngsters believed that they taught themselves to read believing any parental involvement to be incidental. Parents did not have a plan of action for teaching their children to read. Hence, the children considered that they had taught themselves to read.

A majority of the questions in the questionnaire What Children Think About Reading were the ones employed by Southgate, Arnold and Johnson (1981) when they interviewed children aged 7-9. The percentage of children who liked to read and thought themselves good readers was higher in this study than the one conducted by Southgate, Arnold and Johnson. Although a majority of children from both studies believed that children and adults should learn to read, the reasoning given was different. In this study the children believed that children need to know how to read in order to be able to read to their children when they grow up, indicating that as young as they are they realize the importance of reading to children. In Southgate, Arnold and Johnson (1981) study, the most common response related to reading being an aid in further learning.

Summary

These early readers considered themselves to be good readers who enjoyed reading. They also indicated that they had learned to read by themselves, each doing it in a different way. They felt that it was necessary for children and adults to learn how to read.

C. Research Question 3

What sociocultural factors influence children's early reading behavior?

Parental Questionnaire

I. Reading Development

The range of time the children in this study have been reading ranged from 1 to 24 months. The child who had been considered a competent, independent reader as judged by her parents for the longest period of time was also the most advanced reader. The reverse was true for the child with the lowest reading ability. The ages that these children became interested in written words and numbers ranged from 15 months to 38 months. The literacy development of these youngsters involved a variety of activities including picking out known words in stories, asking pronunciation of unknown words, inquiring about environmental print, memorizing stories, printing and spelling words. All children moved through the following phases: being read to at an early age, learning the alphabet, reading environmental print, picking out words from stories, memorization of stories, reading easy books and advancing to more difficult texts.

They read a variety of books but one of the deciding factors for choosing a book appeared to be "readability," a factor mentioned by three parents. Sue's mother commented," Books that don't have lots of words" seem to be the most suitable. Melanie's mother stated, "She picks up more difficult books. She is attempting a lot of

different ones." Chris' mother declared, "It used to be little books but now it is sort of longer books." Such comments also indicate that these children were aware of their reading ability and were able to judge (with parental help) when they were capable of proceeding on to more difficult texts. It should be noted that the parents' understanding of readability differs somewhat from the technical sense of the word.

Each parent stated that their child had a collection of books at home and 5 of them reported the library as another source for books. These five parents stated that their children were or had been members of the library. Three of them had been members since they were two. Three of the parents still read to their children and the other three commented that now they read to them only occasionally as the children did not need it as they could read for themselves. Four parents reported that their children used old basal readers as reading material.

Every parent declared they bought books that would help their child learn to read. The types of materials most often purchased were easy to read books, and reading readiness workbooks that are readily available in supermarkets and drugstores. The types of materials that the children utilized when involved in literacy types of activities consisted of basal readers, computers, story books, environmental print, paper and pencil.

Four parents considered that they did not teach their child to read but provided assistance. One child had the assistance of two older brothers. Parents acknowledged that they encouraged their child to read but felt that their encouragement resulted from the

child's interest. First, the child became motivated to read, then the parents assisted him/her in this endeavor. "I like to think we encouraged him in a sense that we read to him a lot when he was smaller ... but I think there was something inside of Ken that says I want to know what that says. I think a lot of it was self-motivated." Parents stated that the children showed interest in learning to read for a variety of reasons: a challenge, pride, a thirst for knowledge, interest and sibling rivalry.

Help was provided with letters, words, and spelling. Assistance was generally provided by the mother except in one case where assistance was also provided by two older brothers. When meeting unknown words, four parents stated that if the child could not identify or figure out a word he/she would ask for assistance. Five parents had no special concerns about their child's early reading ability.

II. Activities.

Four parents related their child's favorite activities were physical types of activities such as bike riding, running, dancing and skating. All the children preferred children's company to adults. Four parents related that their children played well by themselves. All children watched children's shows on television such as Mr. Dress-Up, Mr. Rodger's and Sesame Street. Five parents gave credit to Sesame Street for helping their children with letters, words, and the sound of letters.

III. Family Background.

Only two parents, including a former teacher, indicated that they had read anything about teaching reading. Although parents

indicated that they themselves read an average or an above average amount, their reading appeared to be sporadic. Their tastes in literature included fiction, non-fiction, newspapers and magazines. The two families that contained older siblings indicated that 3 of the 4 older siblings were early readers.

IV. Characteristics of Early Readers.

Five of the six parents indicated that these children could be characterized as having good memories, with persistence (four of the six) being another attribute of these children. The children were portrayed as being active and energetic by four of the parents.

Discussion

These children belonged to an environment where literacy development was considered to be an important part of children's lives. Generally, these children had been read to since they were toddlers. Other siblings were also reported as early readers in those families when there were older siblings. The importance of a literate environment in early reading has been a major finding of the studies which have examined family background (Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1976; Hayden, 1981; Anabar, 1985; Grant and Brown, 1986) and of investigations that document the reading development of a child that was an early reader (Lass, 1982-1983; Schmidt and Yates, 1985; and van Lierop, 1985).

Although their homes had a collection of books, libraries were used to supplement these texts. Five children were or had been library members. Clark (1976) noted the importance of the library in the literacy development of the children in her study. Even though, the library was utilized by 5 of the early readers in this

investigation, the parents appeared to consider their home collection of books as adequate and seemed to consider the library as a supplementary source of books. When discussing reading material for children, one mother commented, "Got just shelves of books" while another one said, "I've got a library in the family room of books." In this study the home appeared to be a more important source of books than the library which played a supplementary role.

Children had first shown an interest in letters and numbers from a time period ranging from 15 to 38 months. When they first started to read, each seemed to move through the following phases: being read to at an early age, learning the alphabet, reading environmental print, picking out words from stories, memorization of stories, reading easy books and advancing to more difficult texts. Five parents acknowledged Sesame Street as having some influence on the early literacy development of their children. Parents in the studies conducted by Salzer (1984) and Anabar (1985) reported similar findings.

Parents bought easy to read books and reading readiness workbooks, possibly thinking these types of materials would help their children and might be a good preparation for school since workbooks are associated with schools. Assistance with text was offered when the child required it, supporting the findings of Durkin (1966), Clark (1976) and Anabar (1985). Nearly all studies conducted on early reading have established that one of the significant factors in the development of early reading has been an encouraging, interested person who has been willing to answer the child's questions about print.

Only one parent had concerns about her child's early reading ability. She was concerned that he might be bored in school. In Clark's (1976) study, she found that the parents of the early readers were "bewildered and even embarrassed" that their children could read. The parents in this present study did not portray either of these emotions. They seemed to accept it as something that some children do. As one parent commented, "Let it flow."

Recently there has been a emphasis in the popular press on the 'super child'. In addition, magazines and newspapers encourage parents to read to their children. In today's society, early reading is periodically discussed whereas the parents in Clark's (1976) study possibly had little exposure to such ideas. The parents interviewed in this study may believe that early reading gives their child a better start in school, consequently, they were not overly concerned.

Parents in this study believed that they did not teach their child to read but only offered assistance when the children needed help with letters, words, and spelling. The Durkin (1966), Clark (1976), Salzer (1984) Anabar (1985) studies report similar claims. Although, only Durkin (1966) and Anabar (1985) found that the parents in their studies gave similar types of assistance. As in Clark's (1976) investigation, the children in this present study generally sought assistance from parents when trying to identify an unknown word.

Parents described their children as being the initiators of learning to read: the desire came from within the children themselves. Parents only assisted and encouraged the children in the fulfillment of this desire. The early readers were self-motivated

for a variety of reasons: a challenge, pride, a thirst for knowledge, interest or sibling rivalry. Clark (1976), Lass (1982-1983) and Pinson (1982) perceive this inner motivation to be the chief reason why children become early readers.

These early readers enjoyed physical types of activities and were considered to be active, energetic children by their parents. They preferred children's company to adults. The characteristic that was most outstanding in the early readers in this study was a good memory. Durkin (1966) and Schnur and Lowrey (1986) reported that the early readers in their studies had exceptional memories. This characteristic coupled with the interest and motivation to read may be central to the reading development of early readers.

Summary

The early readers who participated in this study came from literate environments where they were read to at an early age either from books that were in the home or books borrowed from the library. They were active, energetic children preferring physical activities, associating with children rather than adults and content to play by themselves.

When they first started to read, they were involved in the following activities: picking out words, reading environmental print, memorization, printing and spelling words. Five parents thought Sesame Street had some influence on the early literacy development.

The most outstanding characteristic of the children was a good memory. Parents contended that the early reader displayed the desire and the motivation in learning to read and assistance was only provided when requested. Assistance was given by the parents but

in one case two older brothers provided help. The types of assistance provided included: help with letters, words, spelling and story reading. A majority of the parents displayed no concern about their child's early reading ability.

OVERALL SUMMARY

Generally, the early readers in this study perceived themselves as readers and were seen to be readers by their parents. Interest in learning to read was initiated by the child but was enhanced, mediated and encouraged by an interested person. In other words, they were not formally brought to the awareness of print. Rather, print was woven into their lives incidentally.

The children's competence in processing print was a result of their competent use of the three systems to overcome difficulties when confronted with difficult text. The availability of a competent reader (parent and/or sibling) to tell them unknown words was used as and considered to be a proficient strategy for successful reading by both the early readers and their parents.

Chapter 5 provides a brief summary of the study, the major findings and conclusions, implications of the study and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter contains an overview of the study reader, the main findings and conclusions and a portrait of an early reader. Recommendations for further research and implications for educators are also presented. This chapter concludes with a final statement.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is threefold: (1) to determine what strategies early readers employ while reading, (2) to establish concepts of reading held by early readers, and (3) to investigate the relationship between the reading process and children's sociocultural environment. The sample consisted of 6 early readers attending kindergarten and 6 of their parents. At the preliminary assessment each child met the following criteria: (1) the ability to read the graded word list contained in the Bader Reading and Language Inventory (1983) at or above the preprimer level and (2) the ability to fluently read one of the easy books Sammy the Seal or Who Will Be My Friends?. The researcher met individually with each child at his/her respective schools 2 to 3 times. During the first session the children were required to preread and oral read passages from the Bader and Language Inventory (1983) until frustration level was reached, to retell what they had read, answer questions about what they had read, respond to questions about the reading behavior

shown while reading, reply to the questionnaire Children's Strategies and to provide a writing sample. A second conference involved the child responding to the second questionnaire, Children's Reading Concepts, and producing another writing sample. Upon completion of the child's sessions, participating parents responded to the parental questionnaire during an interview. The researcher conducted all interviews which were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data were descriptively analyzed. Based upon the synthesis of the data and the findings related in Chapter IV, the following conclusions appear to be justified.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of this study, in light of the limitations noted in Chapter I.

Research Question 1

What strategies does an early reader use when interacting with print?

The early readers achieved higher levels on words in context than on words in isolation or comprehension, implying that their word recognition skills/strategies in context were better developed than either their word recognition in isolation or their comprehension. When meeting an unknown word, these children generally asked someone for help with pronunciation. At instructional level they effectively used the three cueing systems (graphic, syntactic and semantic); however, there appeared to be a

heavier reliance on the syntactic and semantic cues than on the graphic. Substitution was the most common type of miscue generated. When they substituted words, they used real words. As substitutions increased, comprehension decreased.

These youngsters were not always constrained by the text. Their self-regulatory behavior, however, demonstrated that they were attuned to the author's meaning as corrections generally were made because a change in text meaning had been perceived. They employed a combination of text and background knowledge in processing print to create meaning.

Writing samples demonstrated the child's awareness of the form of print. They appeared to be more comfortable performing the activity where they were asked to write something than in the activity where they were asked to write a story. In their writing they used invented and conventional spelling, showed development of the idea of word units, sentence structure and knowledge of page and line arrangement. They were aware when words were spelled incorrectly.

Research Question 2

What concepts of reading are held by early readers?

These early readers considered themselves to be good readers who learned to read by themselves using a variety of techniques. They considered reading to be an activity that both children and adults should engage in.

Research Question 3

What sociocultural factors influence children's early reading behavior?

The early readers came from a literate environment where they were read to at an early age either from books that were in the home or from the library. They were active, energetic children preferring physical activities, associating with children rather than adults and content to play by themselves.

When they first started to read, they were involved in different activities: picking out words, reading environmental print, memorization, printing and spelling words. Some influence on the early literacy development of the early readers was attributed to Sesame Street by the parents.

Their most outstanding characteristic was a good memory. Parents contended that the early reader displayed the desire and the motivation to learn to read and assistance was only provided when requested. Assistance was given by the parents; but in one case, two older brothers also provided help. The types of assistance provided included help with letters, words, spelling and story reading. A majority of the parents expressed no concerns about their child's early reading ability.

PORTRAIT OF AN EARLY READER

In order to provide a composite picture of an early reader and to determine the cultural behavior in conjunction with cultural knowledge, the common characteristics of the subjects in this study

have been synthesized to demonstrate those factors which seem to influence early reading success. From the group data the following portrait of an early reader was drawn. As a majority of the subjects in this present study were female, the early reader in the portrait will be female.

On the surface the early reader appears to be a typical kindergarten child: energetic, active, and preferring physical types of activities. She would rather be with children than adults and is able to occupy herself when others are not around. However, the main characteristic that differentiates her from other kindergarten children is her ability to read. She is perceived as a reader by her parents and teacher and also considers herself to be a reader.

When one learns that a kindergarten child is a reader, the first idea that enters the mind is that she must be intelligent. Durkin (1966), Patel and Patterson (1982) in their studies on early readers discovered that there is no direct correlation between intelligence and early reading. If early reading is not a matter of intelligence, then what does influence it? Perhaps home background may provide an answer to how and why the child becomes a reader.

The early reader comes from a literate background where she is read to from a early age and where literacy activities are a part of everyday life. Her home contains a variety of children's reading material. To supplement the home's reading materials, the library is visited regularly. Her parents periodically buy her books and she also receives books as presents. Reading <u>to</u> and <u>with</u> the child appears to stimulate her interest in books and motivates her to develop an interest in learning to read.

She knows the alphabet from watching Sesame Street and from parental help. Once the alphabet is known, she begins to read environmental print on signs and food boxes and picks out and identifies words in books. At this point she is able to read books she has memorized. From here, she progresses to reading easy books and old readers, if they are available. As she becomes more proficient, she advances to more difficult texts which are chosen both by her parents and herself.

One of the most surprising facts about this kindergarten child being a reader is that she has learned to read without formal instruction. Hence, in her literacy development it is important to note the interactional role played by the child and by the parents. She shows the interest in text, requesting help when necessary and the parents provide help when requested. The child is the initiator; the parents are the mediators and the facilitators.

The early reader is an effective user of the three cueing systems (graphic, grammatical and semantic) when interacting with print. She demonstrates varying patterns in her reading ability. She is more proficient at identifying words in context than at recognizing words in isolation. Her comprehension level is lower than her level for identification of words in context. In other words, she may be able to read material orally but she may not be able to gain sufficient meaning from it. She relies on her language and background knowledge to help her predict words. When comprehending the print she uses on a combination of text and background knowledge in processing print to create meaning.

Her reading skills appeared to be more advanced than her writing abilities. She is more comfortable writing words than writing stories because of her understanding that words should be spelled correctly, she is hampered in her attempts at story writing.

The above portrait describes a child who has through her own initiative gained rite of passage into the world of readers and writers. She is a rather unique individual because she has accomplished a task which has been considered one that cannot be achieved without formal instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This present study has focussed on early readers by examining the strategies they employ when interacting with print, their reading concepts and the sociocultural factors that influence the early reading behavior. The following suggestions are proposed in order to extend the findings of the present study on early reading.

1. The present study examined six early readers before formal instruction in reading has begun. A longitudinal study on early readers initiated in kindergarten and continuing to grade three may demonstrate the effects of schooling on early reading behaviors. It must be noted that information gained on the effects of formal instruction on early reading could point out the discrepancies in reading instruction programs for beginning readers.

2. In this study, only children who were in kindergarten were chosen. A study that involved early readers within a range of ages

might provide more insight into the developmental patterns of early reading.

3. Only two writing samples were collected from each child in this study. Other studies might obtain writing samples produced in the home together with interviewing parents on children's writing acquisition in order to gain a more comprehensive view of the writing development of early readers.

4. The subjects in this study consisted of 5 females and 1 male. A study might examine whether this is the normal pattern for early readers--more females than males. In addition, a study might investigate if there are any differences in literacy development of early reading behaviors between males and females.

5. This study was retrospective in nature. An investigation, identifying early readers at a younger age would allow for more comprehensive documentation of children's literacy development over time. A study of this nature might provide a more accurate, detailed account of the sociocultural factors influencing early literacy development.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

From the conclusions of the study, the following teaching implications are suggested.

1. Early readers enter school with a wealth of knowledge and experience about the reading and writing process. Educators have the responsibility of enhancing the literacy world of these children

by providing experiences that encourage progress along the reading and writing continuum.

2. The early readers in this study came from literacy-rich environments where exposure to various literacy activities nurtured and fostered the children's interest in learning to read. Teachers need to provide a literacy-rich environment so that all children, in particular those who are not as fortunate as the early readers in this study, can develop an interest in reading.

3. School activities tend to be teacher initiated and teacher directed. The early readers in this study have shown that the wish to learn to read is generally initiated by the child. Teachers need to be aware that they can be mediators and facilitators as well as being initiators and directors.

4. When meeting unknown words, the early readers in this study would ask their mother or father to pronounce it. Teachers of beginning readers might tell children unknown words rather than teach them word attack strategies. At this stage in reading development, beginning readers have a limited sight vocabulary. It might be more beneficial to tell them the word until they become more proficient at identifying words.

5. When reading, the early readers in this study used a variety of texts including basal readers were used. In schools, children usually read only basal readers. It might be advantageous to children for teachers to supplement basal readers with other types of reading materials to help foster reading development.

6. The children in this study were more comfortable writing lists of words than writing stories. In schools, writing lists of words

is usually not considered to be an acceptable writing activity. In the beginning phases of writing development, it might be advantageous for teachers of young children to begin by having children become competent at composing lists of words before story writing is introduced.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Although the children in this study had learned to read without systematic formal instruction, they could effectively process and comprehend print. They became early readers as a consequence of their motivation and interest in learning to read coupled with literacy experiences that were encouraged, mediated and nurtured in a literate home environment by supportive, interested individuals (parents and/or siblings). In their attempts to make sense of their world, early readers take advantage of the print that surrounds them, involving those who are already members of the literacy club in helping them discover the world of print by picking up easily and competently the reading processing strategies which literates generally use to enrich and broaden their lives.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
SAMPLE QUESTIONS ABOUT READING BEHAVIOR

Transcription 1: Sample Questions About Reading Behavior

1. Researcher: I noticed sometimes you were reading, like right here, you repeated the words "some of his", why did you do that?

   Child: I really don't know why.

   R: You don't know why. Do you repeat words sometimes when you are reading?

   C Yeah.

   R: Why do you do that? Why do you think?

   C Because I get my words wrong.

   R: So you do that to correct it?

   C Yeah.

2. R: Why do you think you put that word in there? (She added the word "do" to the text. Researcher points out the word "do" in the text.)

   C I just didn't notice that that there wasn't a "do".

   R: So why did you put 'do' in? Do you do that--sometimes put words in?

   C Yeah.

   R: Why?

   C Because I just want to. Sometimes I read stories different ways.

3. R: Right here when you were reading you said "pointed rocks" and then you corrected it and said "pointed stones", why did you correct it? (Researcher points to part in text.)

   C I just didn't see the word stone.

4. R: Right here you reread this part "For the most part, the wood and bone", why did you reread this? (Researcher points to part in text.)

C Well, because I had thought I had got it wrong. I thought I did.

APPENDIX B
CHILDREN'S STRATEGIES

Children's Strategies Questionnaire

1. What do you do when you come to a word you do not know?
2. What is easy for you when you read?
3. What is hard for you when you read?
4. How do you figure out words?
5. How would you help someone learn to read?

(Adapted from Goodman & Altwerger, 1981)

Transcription 2: Sample of Children's Strategies Questionnaire

1. Researcher: What do you do when you come to a word you don't know?

   Child: Ask somebody to tell you what the word is.

   R: What about if you are by yourself and there is no one around to tell you, what do you do then?

   C I sound them out.

   R: How do you sound them out? What does that mean?

   C Well, like if you were at an "m" you would have to go "MMM".

   R: Does that work for you when you do that?

   C Well, no, if you didn't know what a word was and it said "me" you would have to go "M-M-M E-E-E" and the you would know "me".

2. R: What is easy for you when you read?

   C I don't know.

3. R: What is hard for you when you read?

   C The words that I don't know.

4. R: How do you figure out words?

   C I always ask my mum what they are.

5. R: How would you help someone learn how to read?

   C I would get a story and read them to them and also I would sit beside them and see if they would get the story right.

APPENDIX C
CHILDREN'S READING CONCEPTS

Children's Reading Concepts Questionnaire

1. Do you like to read?
2. What do you like to read?
3. Where do you get the books from?
4. Do you read a lot at home?
5. Where do you read?
6. Do the people at home read a lot?
7. What do they read?
8. Where do they read?
9. Do they ever read to you? Who?
10. Do you like it ? Why?
11. What do they read to you?
12. How did you learn to read?
13. Did someone help you to learn how to read?
14. Do you think you are a good reader?
15. Do you think children should learn to read? Why?
16. Do you think grown-ups need to be able to read? Why?

(Adapted Goodman & Altwerger, 1981; Southgate, Arnold & Johnson, 1981)

Transcription 3: Sample of Children's Reading Concepts Questionnaire

1. Researcher: Do you like to read?

   Child: Yep.

2. R: What do you like to read?

   C Stories of adventure and nursery rhymes.

3. R: Where do you get your books?

   C: My daddy usually buys them for me when I bees good.

4. R: Do you read a lot at home?

   C Yes, well, nearly all the time, well, nearly all the time.

5. R: Where do you read?

   C Sometimes in my bed.

   R: Where else?

   C On the couch in the livingroom.

   R: Anywhere else?

   C Nope.

6. R: Do the people at home read a lot?

   C At least one of my cousins does. She has quite a lot of books.

   R: How about your mom and dad?

   C They don't read very much.

7. R: What do they read?

   C My dad reads the newspaper and my mom reads the television guide.

8. R: Where do they read?

   C Always in the livingroom.

9. R: Do they ever read to you?

C: No. Cause I can read.

R: So they don't read to you anymore?

C: No.

12. R: How did you learn to read?

C: When I was a baby my mommy read nursery rhymes to me and when she finished a section she would let me try to read it.

13. R: Did someone help you to learn?

C: I learned by myself.

R: How did you do that?

C: Well, just by trying to get the words together.

14. R: Do you think you are a good reader?

C: Yep.

R: Why?

C: Cause my mommy and daddy says so.

15. R: Do you think children should learn to read?

C: Yes.

R: Why?

C: Because a few of them can't read too well. They learn little words like 'and, no' but I can read all the words like exclamation.

16. R: Do you think grown-ups need to be able to read?

C: Yep.

R: Why?

C: Cause they are bigger than kids so they should know how. A person who didn't know how to read would be funny.

R: Why would that be funny?

C: Because they are grown-ups.

APPENDIX D
PARENTAL INTERVIEW

Parental Questionnaire

Reading Development

1. Can you describe how _____ learned to read?
2. What do you think was the sequence of _____. reading development?
3. How long has he/she been reading in the way he/she does now?
4. What was his/her age at that time?
5. What does he/she like to read at the moment?
6. Where does he/she get his/her books?
7. Does he/she belong to a library (other than a school library)?
   (a) If, so when did he/she first join?
   (b) How often does he/she go to the library?
   (c) Does he/she choose his/her own books, or get help?
   (d) Does he/she ever express a wish to go to the library?
   (e) Does he/she have another source of books?
8. Does anyone read to him/ her now?
   (a) If so, the same or different books?
   (b) Who reads to him/her?
9. What does he/she do if he/she comes to a word he/she does not know?
10. Do you often suggest a book he/she would enjoy, or does he/she enjoy choosing his/her own? (Buying or borrowing)
11. How old was he/she when he/ she first started to try and read?

12. At what age did he/she first show an interest in written words and numbers?
13. How did he/she first start to read?
14. What were some of the the things that interested him/her in learning to read?
15. What kinds of materials did he/she use?
16. Did you ever buy books that you thought would help?
    (a) What kind?
    (b) When was he/she first helped?
    (c) What form did the help take?
    (d) Who helped mostly?
    (e) How often did they help?
    (f) Was the help regular or irregular?

Activities

17. What kinds of activities does he/she seem to prefer?
18. When no other children are available, what does he/she do?
19. With whom does he/she mainly play?
20. When playing with other children, what do they do?
21. Does he/she prefer to spend his/her time with adults or children?
22. Does he/she watch television? If so, how often?
23. Are you aware of anything that he/she has learned from television?

Family Background

24. Have you read any books about teaching children to read?

25. Do you feel his/her interest in reading was initiated by himself/herself or that you encouraged him/her to make a start?
26. Have any of your other children read before starting school?
27. Are any of your younger children showing signs of early reading?
28. Did you or your spouse read before starting school?
29. Do you feel that you and your spouse read more than average, average or less?
30. What kind of books do you like to read? Your spouse?
31. What is your occupation? Your spouse's?
32. What is the highest level of schooling you have received? Your spouse?
33. Do you have any special concerns about your child's early reading ability?

Characteristics of Early Readers

33. During this interview you have used many different words to describe your child. Now I'd like to try to get a total picture of him/her. Could you tell me again the words that best describe your child?
34. If someone else were to take care of your child, what would you feel was especially important for him/her to know about your child?
35. I have a list of words on a card which might or might not describe your child. If a word does describe him/her accurately, would you put a check in front of it? If a word does

not describe your child leave it blank. (On a separate sheet of paper, the following list was given.)

_____ good memory

_____ persistent

_____ curious

_____ competitive

_____ perfectionistic

Would you look over the list again? If there is any word in the list which is an absolutely perfect description of your child, would you put a double check in front of that word?

(Adapted from Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1976; Doake, 1981 and Anabar, 1985).

Transcription 4: Sample of Parental Interview

Reading Development

1. Researcher: Describe how Ken learned to read. How you think he learned to read?

   Mother: Well I think he picked up a lot from Sesame Street. I know you mean. It is kind of funny to say from watching TV but he did--sounding out words, how they do it on Sesame Street. They do each word individually, then put them together. He picked up a lot that way and then from Roy and Stan--they showed him a lot. They were really good about sitting with him and saying this is such and such a word and he will sound out words himself. Sometimes he doesn't get them right but he will be able to figure it out just in the sentence, you know. Think basically it was mostly on his own, you know, with a little help from his brothers but I certainly didn't sit there and say, "OK, now's time for your words." They did a lot with him. Oh yeah, he always wanted to be one of the boys so whatever they were doing he wanted to be able to do it. So that sort of maybe spurred him on a bit.

2. R: What do you think was the sequence of events? What did he do first, second, etc.?

   M: Well, he'd sound out words. He would see something written, he knew the sounds the letters make. Then he would sound out the letters and he would try and figure out and put it all together.

R: He knew the letters first and then he would try to sound them out and then he just went to words.

M: Right--a lot of the easier words, the shorter words two and three letter words, like no big deal.

3. R: How long has he been reading in the way he does now?

M: For about a year, you know. He has been improving all the time, of course this past year but we noticed about a year ago that he was really able to read.

4. R: What was his age at that time?

M: He was about five because he just turned six.

R: His birthday is April 3?

M: Yup.

5. R: What does he like to read at the moment?

M: Just whatever the boys bring home from school. He has got a lot of books. He's got a lot of the Dr. Seuss books and those are kind of past him. He has left those. He likes reading, what the boys bring home--library books and what not that they bring home. He likes to read those. I think they all go through a stage where they like to read about dinosaurs and lizards and snakes and that.

6. R: Where does he get his books?

M: We were going to the library at one time--once a week but we haven't been going there lately. But things from the book club they send home from school. I'll buy him a book or two sometimes, when those come. Like he reads a lot of what the boys bring home.

R: So does he belong to a library?

M: This year he doesn't but he did last year. He would pick out his own books.

8. R: Does anyone read to him now?

M: I haven't lately. We did read to him a lot but lately I don't see much point in reading to him because he reads so well himself.

9. R: What does he do if he comes to a word he doesn't know?

M: He'll try and sound it out and if it doesn't make sense to him he'll ask me what it is but he will attempt to figure it out himself first.

10. R: Do you often suggest books that he would enjoy or does he choose his own?

M: Mostly he chooses his own. Sometimes I may see something that I think maybe might tell him something or he'll just enjoy. Then I'll say why don't you try this book cause it looks like it might be fun or, you know, might be really interesting or whatever but mostly he just picks out his own and I try and watch that maybe it is not too above his head and that he'd be lost.

11. R: How old was he when he first started to try and read?

M: Well, I'd have to say about three because he was reading wheat pool signs on the grain elevators. My dad took him to Saskatchewan and he said, "Look, grandpa. There's a pool." So he hadn't been, so maybe just around three he would try and sound them out.

12. R: At what age did he first show an interest in written words and numbers?

M: Two--two and half

13. R: How did he first start to read?

M: What do you mean?

R: What was the very first thing when he started to read?

M: He would ask me, say how to make say a 'k' or a 'p'. I would show him how to make the letter. He would try it himself. He was never a real great writer. Roy really liked to make letters and words and stuff like that. Ken wasn't as quite as enthusiastic about it but he would want to make them on his own, you know, and I showed him how to make the letters. He picked up lots from Sesame Street and then by putting them together.

R: It was mostly his own initiative?

M: Yes.

14. R: What were some of the things that interested him in learning to read?

M: I really think it was just that he wanted to be able to do what Roy and Stan did, you know, cause they could read and they knew what that said. I don't know, there seems to be something I noticed especially with Roy and Ken that they didn't like to see something and not know what it was. They'd see a sign and they'd want to know what did it say. What does that say? What does that say? It was always road signs or anything. What does that say? I was constantly telling that that says One Way, that says this, that says that and it frustrates you. Oh, cause you're constantly saying that means this and you're always telling. They're always asking, always asking, "What

does that say? What does that say?" They have very good memories you know. You can tell them that says stop and they would remember it from day to day and you could ask them what does that say and they would say stop.

15. R: What kinds of materials did he use when he was first starting?

M: Well, the books we had on hand--the Dr. Seuss books. Hop on Pop was a great one. He liked me to read that to him like for hours, Hop on Pop. The words were simple enough he could pick them up on his own. A lot of nonsense type things like Dr. Seuss. Some of them are real, Yertle the Turtle that type of thing. He liked that or he did like that when he was learning.

16. R: Did you ever buy books that you thought would help?

M: Oh yeah, like the easy readers books. Sometimes I bought them the Sesame Street magazine. I got them those beginning phonic books that you get in the drugstore. The coloring activity books I buy those sometimes but I didn't do a lot. Only if I had a bit of extra cash I would say, "Ok, guys, pick out a book or a magazine or something and instead of candy today."

R: When was he first helped? When did you first start?

M: When did I really notice that he was picking up words?

R: No. When did you first start help, you know when he first stated asking for p's and...

M: Two and a half maybe when he started showing an interest in the letters and numbers and things like that.

R: What form did the help take? What kinds of things did you do to help him?

M: Well, I helped him with his letters and with differentiating between an 'a' and a 'b' and that sort of thing, this letter and that letter and telling him what words said. Like if he said, "What is this word?" I would say that's cat or whatever it is and if he had a question I would answer it for him or if he wanted to know something I would tell him what was or how to do it or why it was done that way or whatever. You know, whatever he asked.

R: Who helped mostly?

M: Me or Ned?

R: Whoever? Who do you think was the most influential?

M: I think actually it was Roy and Stan that helped him the most because they were very patient sitting there with their readers and reading to him and letting him read to them and at the time Jed was just a baby and I didn't have time to sit with Ken and they were really good about it. They would sit and they would read with him or to him or listen to him read or whatever.

R: Did they also tell him words and stuff like that?

M: Oh yeah, they say that doesn't say that. It says this if he pronounced it wrong, they would correct him and things like that.

R: How often did they help?

M: They would come home from school just about every day if they had something new to read and he was very interested in seeing their work The work they did in school and sometimes they would bring things that weren't finished and he would finish them for them. It wasn't things they had to take back. Well, you can do this so.

R: So the help was regular then?

M: Ya.

R: What kinds of things would they do with them?

M: They would go through their readers and their workbooks and papers sometimes and show him the kinds of work they did in school. They would listen to him read or whatever. Sometimes they would play school and things like that.

Activities

17. R: What kinds of activities does he seem to prefer?

M: As in reading activities?

R: No, just general.

M: Ken was always--he liked to do physical things. He liked to go outside and practice for days and days jumping on one foot until he mastered it. That was his pastime for about a week and a half. That's all he did. He would go outside and he'd jump on one foot. He likes to get outside. He likes to go. He hasn't mastered riding a two wheeler yet but he rides his tricycle every day. He just goes crazy. Sometimes I thought he was hyper because he would, when he was younger, he would just run back and forth and back and forth. Maybe he had an excess of energy, I don't know maybe he just liked to feel.

R: He likes being outdoors that sort of thing?

M: He likes active sorts of things. He likes to keep going and doing.

18. R: When no other children are available, what does he like to do?

M: He'll play by himself. He was always good at playing by himself. He would sit down and stay where I put him and he would play with whatever was handy and he was quiet by himself.

R: Even now what kinds of things does he do when he plays by himself?

M: He'll play cars or he'll play with those little He-men not He-man but Super Powers or something like that. He play by himself or with Jed but mostly by himself.

19. R: With whom does he play mainly?

M: I'd have to say Jed right now because they're together a lot. He's home in the mornings with him. They don't always get along real well because Jed doesn't understand the rules of the game. I guess it's Jed.

R: How old is he?

M: Jed is two.

20. R: When playing with other children what do they do?

M: They'll play outside. If they're outside, they play whatever they play outside--cops and robbers or explorers whatever they play. If they're inside they'll play cars or with the Super Power guys or something like that.

21. R: Does he prefer to spend his time with adults or with children?

M: He likes being with kids his own age. Like he really likes kindergarten and the things they do there and there's one little guy in his class that his mom has invited Ken over a few times, Mrs. Green. Really enjoyed going over there as they made ice

cream. She must have a lot of patience as she had six boys over there. The thought just scares me to death--all from kindergarten. He does like playing with kids his own age, though.

22. R: Does he watch TV?

M: He watches a lot of TV. He watches in the morning when he's home here. He'll watch Sesame Street. If it comes on three times, he'll watch it three times. He really likes it. And he'll watch Today's Special. He likes that one, too, Mr. Rodger's and Captain Kangaroo. He's not as crazy about those about those as he is about Sesame Street, though.

R: That's his favorite?

M: Yup, and now they've got a new one that comes on after school Square One. It's a new math show and it's really good. It's all Math. Ken watches it with Roy and Stan. It's all a big joke. They talk about all these mathematical things and that it all is really funny.

23. R: Are you aware of anything that he has learned from watching TV?

M: He has learned to read from TV. I would say that the basis of his learning to read is from TV from Sesame Street mainly. They showed him how to sound out words. They have the two-headed monster on there. One says R-R and the other says u-n. R-R u-n and they'll go back and forth like that and then they put them together. They show them how to, I think, that showed him how to sound out words on his own.

Family Background

24. R: Have you ever read any books about teaching children to read?

M: Never.

25. R: Do you feel his interest in reading was initiated by himself or that you encouraged him to make a start?

M: Well, I like to think that maybe we encouraged him in a sense as we read to him a lot when he was smaller. Always read to the boys sometimes I read them six stories before bed as they tried get away with a few more, you know to stay up a little bit longer. I always read to them a lot when they were small before they could read themselves. I don't so much now. And I think that does encourage them but I think that something within Ken that says I want to know what that says. I think a lot of it was self-motivated.

26. R: Have any of your other children read before they started school?

M: Stan could read when he started grade one. He was--the teacher said the best reader in the class. He could read very well.

R: That's your oldest?

M: No, he's in grade two now. Roy the oldest and he's in grade three. Roy could read some not enough to go through a reader or anything I don't think but he knew some simpler words.

27. R: How about Jed is he showing any signs?

M: He just turned two in February. He likes to scribble and he likes to draw and things like that and he is just fascinated with

what happens on Sesame Street and he sees a sign and he'll say bus stop. Everything says bus stop right now.

R: But at least he's figured that much out?

M: Yeah, they figure out bus stop on there and there was something and he says bus stop. It wasn't bus stop but he figured it was so maybe he is going to be the same.

28. R: Did you or your husband read before starting school?

M: I didn't or at least I don't remember. I don't think Ned did either.

29. R: Do you feel that you and your husband read more than average, average or less than average?

M: I definitely read more than average. Ned I would say reads average, sometimes little more than average. I'm the big reader in the house. I read just about anything I can get my hands on.

30. R: What kinds of books do you like to read?

M: That depends, I like to read mysteries. I'm really big on Ludlum and George Smiley the spy books, the English guy LeCarre. If I have absolutely nothing to read I'll read a Harlequin romance. If there is absolutely nothing else I'll read one of those cause it only takes an hour but I read a lot of different things. Some of it true but most of it fiction.

R: What about your husband? What kinds of things does he like to read?

M: He likes mysteries that sort of thing. He's really big on Ludlum--action.

31. R: What is your occupation?

M. I'm a housewife right now.

R: Your husband?

M: He's a pipefitter-plumber.

32. R: What is the highest level of schooling you have ever received?

M: Ned has finished grade twelve and trade school and I did grade twelve.

33. R: Do you have any special concerns about your child's early reading ability?

M: Well, not really, you don't really think about it to much until you sit down and consider that he can read.

R: You have no real great concerns?

M: The only thing that worries me about Ken is that he might get bored. Maybe grade one will be really boring and what is he going to do then, you know. What's he going to do then. Maybe get in trouble in class because he's so bored and start looking for something else to do. That's the only thing that really worries me. I know he has what it takes to go through grade one and not have any problems with anything that they are going to throw at him. Is it going to be enough? I'm thinking of of sending him to French immersion. They are going to have it here and he'll be going there and I don't know if he'll like it but if he is willing to try, we'll send him.

Characteristics of Early Readers

34. R: During this interview you have used many different words to describe your child. Now I'd like to try to get a total picture of him. Could you tell me again the words that best describe your child.?

M: He can be very independent minded but he can also be really attached to mum and he 's not really brave enough to go out on his own. He can be. Well, like today he was really early for school. He walked and I went down to drop off his lunch. He was really early and by the time I got there he was standing there crying and he said, "There's nobody there." I said " You're so early , Kevin, there not going to be there for awhile. You're going to have to wait." He was very upset. He figured I had gone off to Fort Saskatchewan and he was there and there was no school and what was he going to do. He's very easy to get along with kids his own age. Fights like crazy with his brothers. He can be very, very stubborn, very stubborn. You can tell him something is blue and if he doesn't want it to be blue it won't be blue. It's his way or no way some days. He'll stick with something. He'll just stick with it and plug at and plug at it. It funny like the hopping on one foot that was just the most hilarious thing I have ever seen. Here he was just trying so hard to hop on one foot and it just one of those gross motor skills that is harder for some kids than others but he was determined he was going to do it and he just practised and practised and practised and eventually he got it. He's very determined, you know.

R: He does that a lot does he?

M: Oh, yeah. I'm surprised with his two wheeled bike he's trying to learn how to ride that but he not as determined with that. I guess, it's something he not too worried about doing. But if there's something he wants to do, he'll do it. He'll stick with it

until he does it . He's very easy for me to get along with. We get along really good when we're here by ourselves with Jed here. He's very interested in what I'm doing. He has to be in what I'm doing. He has to be in there and doing it and he's interested in what his dad is doing, you know.

35. R: If someone one else were to take care of him, what would you feel was especially important for her to know about your child?

M: Ken really likes noise. Ken likes to make noise and sometimes it seems the more noise the better. But he does like to be alone too. He likes his space, you know. He likes to be able to sit down and play by himself without anybody bugging him, without anybody sticking their hands in and taking something or moving things. He likes his space. He doesn't like to be invaded.

36. R: I have a list of words which might or might not describe your child. If a word does describe him accurately, would you put a check in front of it? If a word does not describe your child, leave it blank.

M: Good memory--he definitely does have a good memory. persistent curious (and he is curious) competitive (Yeah, he's competitive to some extent with his brothers) perfectionistic(in some ways he is, he likes things just so). His mother checked off the five traits.

R: Would you look over the list again? If there is any word in the list which is an absolutely perfect description of your child, would you put a double check in front of that word?

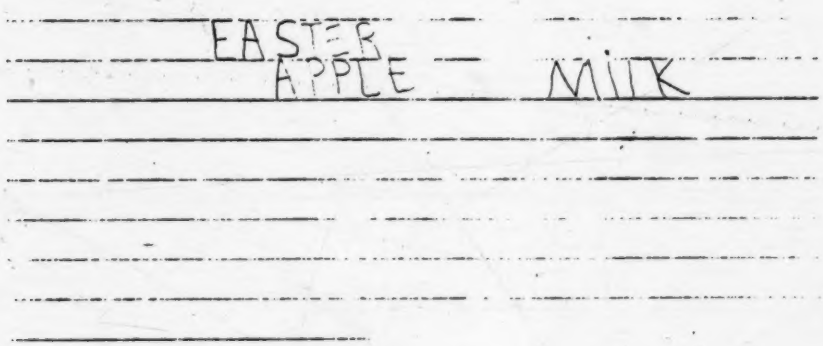
M: I have to say persistent. He is very persistent. That list is Ken to a tee. I always thought that I would be able to sit down

with Roy and when he was really young and I'd be "Here, Roy, OK this is how you read". But it is not as easy as that. It's not something, I don't know how to teach someone how to read. Really, I don't know where to start.

APPENDIX E
WRITING SAMPLES

*** Writing Samples**

Paula's First Writing Sample

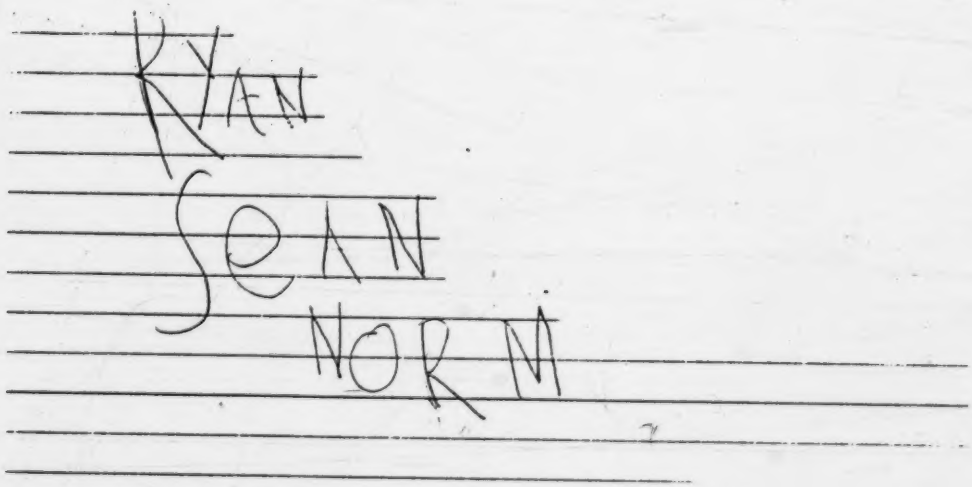


Paula's Second Writing Sample

THERE WAS A WORM IN A APPLE. BUT A BIRD FLEW IN. AND TIRID TO GET it out. But the more it TIRID the MOREITDID NOT GO OUT

* The children's names have been deleted from the writing samples in order to main'ain anonymity.

Ken's First Writing Sample

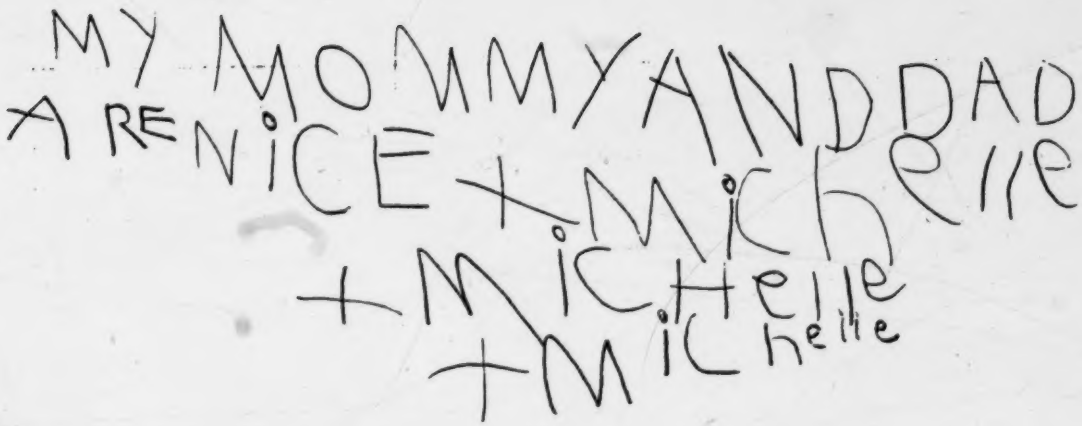


Ken's Second Writing Sample

Once I was at
Grandma's for Easter.
I found my Easter
BASKET AT THE
FRONT OF MY cousins
MOTOR HOME

Sherry's First Writing Sample

Sherry's Second Writing Sample



Sue's First Writing Sample

Mom Andrew Shawn
Bob School

Sue's Second Writing Sample

Park Slide

The following was dictated to the researcher after the above words had been written.

I walk over to the park with my brothers and my dad, my mom,too, sometimes my friend, sometimes my cousins and me and my popple.

Chris' First Writing Sample

Chris' Second Writing Sample

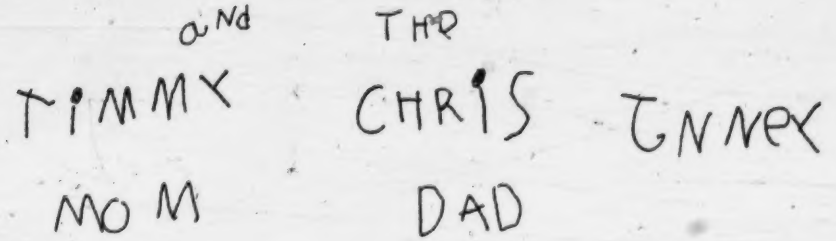
ONCE UPON A TIME
JAMS CUT HIS FINGER

Chris' Third Writing Sample

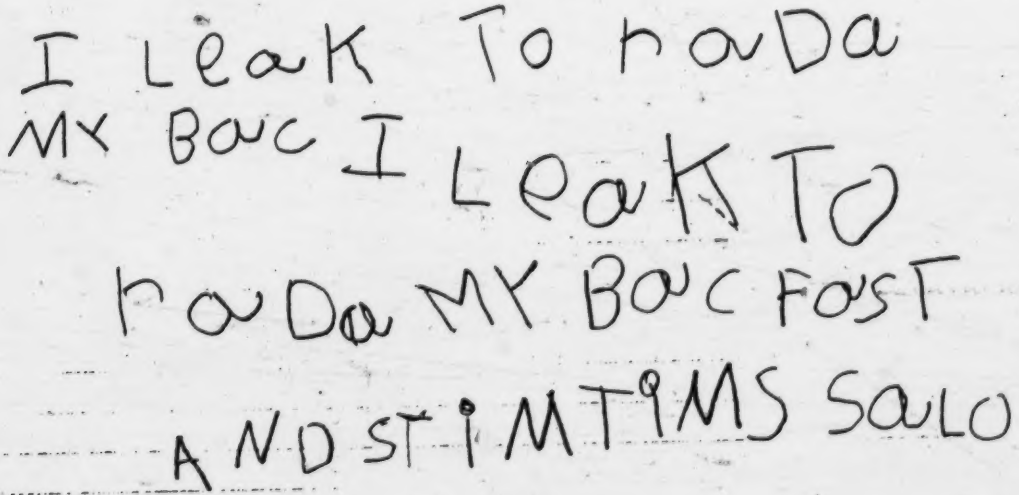
The following story was dictated to the researcher.

Once upon a time there were two dogs named Marcus and Dudley. Then they got out of their cage and got into the garbage. Then they ran in the back yard. I let them in the backyard. Then a big dog almost got them out of the backyard. And they almost ran away.

Melanie's First Writing Sample



Melanie's Second Writing Sample



APPENDIX F

SCORING OF MISCUES

Miscues Recording and Scoring

The following types of reading miscues were recorded and scored according to the Bader Reading and Language Inventory (1983):

(a) **Substitutions**--the reader says a word which is different from the text disrupting text meaning. (SCORE 1)

	Text	Reader
Example:	Isabel saw	Isabel was

(b) **Substitutions**--the reader says a word which is different from the text but does not disrupt text meaning. (SCORE 1/2)

	Text	Reader
Example:	she is	she's

(c) **Insertions**--the reader adds words to the text. (SCORE 1)

	Text	Reader
Example:	when the boy	when the little boy

(d) **Omissions**--the reader leaves out a word. (SCORE 1)

	Text	Reader
Example:	a fat cat	a ___ cat

(g) **Repetitions**--the readers repeats words or phrases. (SCORE 1)

	Text	Reader
Example:	he said	he said--said

(e) **Reversals**--the reader interchanges words, phrases or clauses. (SCORE 1/2)

	Text	Reader
Example:	Isabel said	said Isabel

(f) **Pronunciation**--the examiner pronounces the word for the reader. (SCORE 1)

(h) **Corrections**--the reader self corrects or repeats words to make corrections. (SCORE 0)

	Text	Reader
Example:	When they came	Then they come/when they came.

APPENDIX G
MISCUE ANALYSIS CATEGORIES

Miscue Analysis Categories

In order to analyze the children's miscues the researcher used Malicky's (1986) categories which are a modified version of the Goodman and Burke's Reading Miscue Inventory (1972). Words were analyzed under the following categories:

(a) **Graphic Similarity**--this category provides some indication of the degree of the processing of graphic cues. The stimulus words are divided into three parts and judgement is made as to high, partial or no use of graphic cues in the following manner:

Y (High) A high degree of similarity exists between the miscue and the the text (2 of 3 parts similar).

	Text	Reader
Example:	asked	s/ai/d

P (Partial) Some degree of similarity exists between the miscue and the text (1 of 3 parts similar).

	Text	Reader
Example:	said	cr/i/ed

N (None) Similarity does not exist between the miscue and the text (no parts similar).

	Text	Reader
Example:	we	y/o/u

(b) **Phonic Similarity**--the word parts are again examined. This time for sound similarity. Each word part is judged in terms of whether or not the errors sounds like what was expected.

Y (High) Two of the three parts sound the same.

	Text	Reader
Example:	here	th/er/e

P (Partial) One of the three parts sound the same.

	Text	Reader
Example:	said	cr/i/ed

N (None) None of the parts sound the same.

	Text	Reader
Example:	we	y/o/u

(c) **Grammatical Acceptability**--the miscue's acceptability is dependent upon the the degree to which the miscue forms a structure that is grammatically acceptable. Miscue were coded in the following manner:

Y (High) The miscue occurs in a sentence which is grammatically acceptable in relation to prior and subsequent sentences in the text.

	Text	Reader
Example:	he asked	he said

P (Partial) The miscue occurs in a sentence which is grammatically acceptable but is not acceptable in relation to prior and subsequent sentences in the text or the miscue is grammatically acceptable only with the sentence portion that comes before or after it.

	Text	Reader
Example:	when they came	then they came

N (None) The miscue occurs in a sentence that is not grammatically acceptable.

	Text	Reader
Example:	they would swim	the would swim

(d) **Semantic Acceptability**--the miscue's acceptability is dependent upon the acceptability of the miscue as an understandable meaning structure.

Y (High) The miscue occurs in a sentence which is semantically acceptable and is acceptable in relation to prior and subsequent sentences in the text.

	Text	Reader
Example:	Isabel took her from	Isabel took it from

P (Partial) The miscue occurs in a sentence which is semantically acceptable but is not acceptable in relation to prior and subsequent sentences in the text or the miscue is semantically acceptable only with the portion that comes before or after it.

	Text	Reader
Example:	kitten's soft black fur	kitten's soft back fur

N (None) The miscue occurs in a sentence that is not semantically acceptable.

	Text	Reader
Example:	would swim by	would someone by

(e) **Meaning Change**--this category determines to what extent the reader's predictions change the meaning intended by the author.

Y (High) An extensive change in meaning is involved (if the error changes the basic intent of the author or is meaningless).

	Text	Reader
Example:	This made	This mand

P (Partial) A minimal change in meaning is involved (if the response causes a minor shift in focus without altering the basic intent).

	Text	Reader
Example:	this made	these made

N (None) No change in meaning is involved.

	Text	Reader
Example:	she is	she's

(f) **Corrections**--corrections are analyzed using the above categories. In other words, corrections are coded like miscues. For the purposes of analysis, however, they are not coded with the miscues but are coded separately.

Y (High) The miscue is corrected.

	Text	Reader
Example:	he was	it was/he was

P (Partial) There is an unsuccessful attempt at correction or a correct response is abandoned.

	Text	Reader
Example:	ancient stone ans/ansient stone	

N (None) There has been no attempt at correction.

	Text	Reader
Example:	we made	you made

APPENDIX H
RECALL CATEGORIES

Recall Categories

When analyzing the retellings, the researcher first divided the retellings into clauses. Mazes which include words such as uhs, ums, repeated words and start overs are not analyzed. The recall units are compared to the text units and then assigned one of the following recall categories (Fagan, 1987):

(a) **Text Specific Information**--the reader repeats verbatim a sentence or clause from the text.

(b) **Text Information Synthesized**--the reader synthesizes the text information by putting several ideas into a sentence or clause.

(c) **Reader-Schema Information**--the reader goes beyond the text and draws upon prior knowledge to make inferences, generalizations or elaborations.

(d) **Text Erroneous Information**--the reader incorrectly recalls information.

The following text is divided into clauses:

Little Bear lived by a lake./ He did not have many things./ He only had a cave to live in, a bed to sleep in, and an old pan to cook with./ He had one old book/ that he read again and again./ Still little bear was happy./

Near his house there were many pretty flowers./ The birds sang all day./ Little Bear liked to look at the pretty flowers./ He liked to hear the birds sing./ Little bear wanted to sing like the birds./ But when he tried to sing/, all that came out was a grr, grr./

One child's retelling (divided into clauses) of the above passage:

1. The bear couldn't sing. (Reader-Schema Information)
2. He wasn't a bird. (Reader-Schema Information)
3. The little bear lives by the lake. (Text Specific Information)
4. And he didn't have very many things to do. (Text Information Synthesized)
5. He had an old bed and an old book and a pan to cook with and a bed to sleep in and a cave to live in. (Text Information Synthesized)
6. And when he tried to sing like the birds. (Text Information Synthesized)
7. All that came out was a rabbit, rabbit. (Text Erroneous Information)

APPENDIX I
READING PROFILES

Reading Profiles at Instructional Level

NAME	TIME READING	ISOLATED WORDS	CONTEXT WORDS	COMPREHENSION
PAULA	24 MONTHS	LEVEL 5	* LEVEL 6	LEVEL 5
CHRIS	8-10 MONTHS	PRIMER	LEVEL 3	LEVEL4
KEN	12 MONTHS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 3
MELANIE	6 MONTHS	PRIMER	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 1
SHERRY	4-5 MONTHS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 1	PRIMER
SUE	1 MONTH	PRIMER	PREPRIMER	PREPRIMER

* Level at which testing was discontinued without frustration level being established.